

Gold Chapter 411

Fields of Gold Chapter 411 - Comparison Hurts

It was a cloudy summer day with birds singing. The sky was full of rosy clouds like it was dyed with paint. It reflected upon the figures of the busily working laborers, appearing beautifully magnificent.

On the edge of the field was an elegant and handsome figure, who made the slender figure beside him appear even more petite. The two people were Zhu Junyang, who had just returned from transporting wheat kernels to the capital, and Yu Xiaocao, who was supervising the tenant farmers to grow corn on the edge of the field.

“Look! This is the money from the imperial court for the purchase of the seeds. It's five thousand taels in total. Put it away!” Upon his return to the capital this time, Zhu Junyang had reported the output of Tanggu's wheat, which shocked the whole imperial court. The emperor and a group of ministers, who were concerned about the people and the country, were also elated when they heard the news.

The high yield of corn was due to the fact that the crop itself was high-yielding and it was coupled with meticulous care. So although the officials were somewhat surprised at the results, they weren't in complete disbelief as they were now.

After Minister Liu heard that they had planted winter wheat over at Tanggu Town, he also planted some in the experimental fields at the Imperial Plantation in the capital. The best wheat seeds were selected, and a good amount of fertilizers had been used. They also had experienced, old farmers taking care of the crops... Even though they had done their best in all areas, the yield still didn't exceed four hundred catties per mu.

Minister Liu and his subordinates had also gone to check out the fields at Tanggu Town. The soil wasn't as fertile as the soil at the Imperial Plantation, and the wheat seeds were delivered over from the capital. They had hired long-term workers to tend the fields... There wasn't a single aspect in which they were better than that of the Imperial Plantation, but their fields achieved an output of six hundred catties per mu, which was nearly double that of the Imperial Plantation. What exactly was the reason?

It definitely wasn't due to Royal Prince Yang. Who in the capital didn't know that Royal Prince Yang had been detained in Prince Jing's Estate for some unknown reason since he was young? Even if he went out, he would be followed by highly skilled martial artists. Had the emperor not forced him to take the task of growing corn, he might never have the chance to deal with farming in his life. He was the type of person who only knew about cooked rice and steamed buns, but didn't recognize rice and wheat.

Minister Liu carefully made a conclusion and comparison. The only difference between Tanggu Town and the Imperial Plantation was that the fields in Tanggu were managed by the Yu Family. He had specially inquired the royal prince about the Yu Family's farmstead, which was not too far from the eight hundred mu of farmlands in Tanggu. They had also reaped a high yield. The nearby plantations all ordered the improved variety seeds from the Yu Family. The price of the wheat kernels had gone up to fifty copper coins per catty.

Minister Liu had specially compared the wheat produced by the Imperial Plantation and the grain transported from Tanggu Town. He noticed that the wheat grains from Tanggu Town's fields were a size bigger than that of the Imperial Plantation. Moreover, they all looked like a little fatty and appeared very full. He was also surprised to see the wheat ears that Royal Prince Yang brought back. It was about the same length as an adult man's middle finger, and it was almost twice as long as the ears of wheat produced by the Imperial Plantation. No wonder the output was so much higher.

If they used these wheat kernels as seeds, would they be able to have a big harvest next year? To be able to reach a yield of five hundred catties per mu would also be considered a great improvement ah! There would still be people willing to buy it for a higher price, let alone fifty copper coins per catty!

In order to make a thorough comparison, the emperor had specially ordered people to grind the wheat from the two places into flour. They were made into steamed buns for the officials in court to taste. People should be content and not make unnecessary comparisons. The steamed buns made of the Imperial Plantation's wheat flour appeared like a humble maidservant compared with the steamed buns made of Tanggu's wheat flour.

The Imperial Plantation's steamed buns were fine by themselves. They were just regular steamed buns with a decent taste. However, when compared with Tanggu's steamed buns, the results were apparent. Tanggu's steamed buns were white and plump, and they emitted an alluring smell. With a chewy mouthfeel, it had a sweet and delicious taste. Even though it wasn't some special dish, people wouldn't be able to stop after eating one.

For the two steamer baskets of steamed buns, the officials only tried a small bite of the Imperial Plantation's steamed buns, and completely devoured the steamed buns made of Tanggu's wheat flour. Two military officials had even fought for the last piece of bun, and nearly got into a fist fight.

Zhu Junfan, who sat on the imperial throne, ate half a bun and yearned for more. Since he had transmigrated here, he had always eaten the steamed buns similar to that of the ones made of the Imperial Plantation's wheat flour. Without a flour bleaching agent, it appeared darker and had a sticky mouthfeel. It didn't taste as good as the high gluten flour from his previous life. Today, he had finally

eaten a delicious steamed bun that was white, soft, and fragrant. It was even tastier than the steamed buns he ate in his previous life.

This must be the credit of his fellow transmigrator friend. How did she improve the wheat into this current version? Or could it be...that she had a blessed spot to plant crops as her transmigration cheat? Wasn't it like this in all the novels? Transmigrating with a Realm, Farming in a Transmigration Void, Personal Realm: A Hundred Thousand Mu of Fertile Farmland... Zhu Junfan was immersed in his daydream as he sat on his imperial throne, and totally didn't notice that his officials were about to get into a physical fight due to a steamed bun.

Su Ran noticed that his master's mind had drifted far away, so he quickly coughed twice to remind him to pay attention to the two military officials. It was too embarrassing. They weren't beggars in the slum area, so was it really necessary for them to act this way for a steamed bun?

By the time Zhu Junfan returned to senses, the two old generals, who were over a hundred years old together, had already begun to fight. He loudly cleared his throat, and the people around the two old generals hastily pulled them apart. Seeing that the emperor had a displeased expression on his face, the court immediately quieted down. Only the sound of the two old generals' heavy breathing could be clearly heard.

Zhu Junfan didn't know if he should laugh or cry, and said, "It seems like my beloved officials favored the improved variety of wheat from Tanggu Town's plantation. We do too! There's such a big difference between the grain grown from the same seeds. What exactly is the reason?"

The ministers immediately began to debate. Some expressed that it was due to the water and soil, while some said that it was because of the climate. There were also some who said that it was related to the people who managed the fields... At this time, Minister Liu exerted Zhuge Liang's [1] vigorous debate skills and refuted all of the factors speculated by the officials.

The conclusion was somewhat mysterious yet irrefutable—as long as the Yu Family participated in the process in the cultivation, their results would almost always be different from others. They grew early spring vegetables and sweet watermelons. They had a good harvest of corn despite the locust plague, and they also got a high yield of wheat. Facts spoke louder than words. Those who strongly opposed the Yu Family becoming imperial officials earlier had stopped and no longer came out to voice their objections!

Zhu Junfan smiled and said, "The Yu Family is really capable! Especially the little girl from the Yu Family! We heard that it was the twelve year old girl who suggested to plant the vegetables, watermelon, corn, as well as the winter wheat. It seems like the one who is truly capable in the Yu Family is this unassuming young girl!"

"Your Imperial Majesty, I don't oppose the men of the Yu Family joining the imperial court as an official, but...if Your Majesty wants to promote the little girl, I'm afraid that the people will criticize the decision..." Imperial Censor Yang jumped out again. This person was seriously inflexible and didn't know when to stop.

Zhu Junfan chuckled and said, "Criticism? As long as the people have enough to eat and wear, why would we be afraid of some criticism? When we were still the heir of Imperial Prince Li, we had built a shipyard and constructed large ships. Weren't there also a lot of officials who said that we were wasting money and manpower? Those doubts were automatically disproved after we personally set sail to seek the high-yielding and stomach-filling sweet potatoes. Without those ships that we made, would we have the high-yield sweet potatoes, corn, and potatoes now?"

"Your Imperial Majesty is wise!" The officials bowed to the emperor and were sincerely convinced by his foresight. Corn and potato had not been popularized, but they knew very well the importance of sweet potatoes. In the north, the number of people who died due to successive years of disasters was far less than that of previous years. Moreover, they were also able to quickly return to their normal lifestyles. In addition to the emperor's benevolence in tax reduction and exemption, it was also because sweet potatoes were high-yielding and suitable for all types of soil. Therefore, the victims of the disasters wouldn't die of starvation due to a lack of food.

"Since ascending the throne, we have attached great importance on the livelihood of the common people. For the sake of the people being able to fill their stomachs and wear warm clothes, we have been looking for experts who can promote agriculture. Now, an extraordinary talent in farming has appeared. Do we really have to give up on her because of her gender?" Zhu Junfan asked in a very sincere manner.

The bowing court officials didn't say anything, but Imperial Censor Yang still very tactlessly voiced his opinion, "Emperor, you can reward her father and older brother..."

"Beloved Official Yang, the girl is still young, so her father and older brother can help her with the cultivation for the next few years. But what happens when she grows up and gets married in a few years? Her father and brother occupies her position but can't do much for the common people. Is our Great Ming Dynasty going to bestow positions to officials who hold the office and enjoy the privileges without making any contributions?" Zhu Junfan spoke in a serious tone and questioning manner. He

hated those pests who held onto a position without doing any work and didn't let others take over. However, these good-for-nothing officials still existed and there was no way to prevent them from clinging on.

Imperial Censor Yang wanted to refute, but he didn't know how to reply to the emperor's words. He frowned and seemed to be lost in his thoughts. Seeing that the emperor was enraged, the other officials didn't dare to make anymore comments.

Zhu Junfan lightly sighed and said, "Let's discuss this matter again after we see the father and daughter of the Yu Family. Junyang, send a hundred catties of the wheat you brought over to each official's house. Consider it a reward!"

"Your Majesty, please don't!!" The officials were very happy and were about to thank the emperor when Minister Liu of the Ministry of Revenue jumped out and tried to stop the emperor's order with his life.

Zhu Junfan was mentally tired ah. He sighed and asked, "Beloved Official Liu, what 'high opinion' do you have?"

"Emperor! The wheat kernels that Royal Prince Yang brought back are all plump grains, which makes them excellent seeds ah! This official thinks that the wheat should be used as seeds and planted around the capital. Your Majesty, imagine how many people will benefit if these seeds produce a high yield and are popularized all over the country ah! This official thinks that these wheat kernels should be stored as improved variety seeds and not be eaten as food!"

The officials were still reminiscing the taste of the white, plump steamed buns. When the emperor said that he would give the grains to them, their hearts burst with joy. With one hundred catties of wheat, they could grind seventy to eighty catties of flour, right? Wouldn't they be able to make a lot of steamed buns then? It would definitely be enough to satisfy their cravings! What was wrong with this Minister Liu? To ask the emperor to retract his imperial edict, he was seriously harming others without any self-interest! 'Your Majesty, you stand your ground ah!!'

Zhu Junfan felt very relieved yet tired to have an official who wholeheartedly cared about the common people. In fact, Minister Liu's words were quite reasonable. However, could he really not even reward these officials, who had helped him with a lot of worries, with a mere bag of wheat?

Fields of Gold Chapter 412 - You Are My Angel

“Beloved Official Liu! Royal Prince Yang has brought back at least five hundred thousand catties of wheat. Giving each official in court one hundred catties would only use up less than ten thousand catties. Although the improved wheat kernels are important, giving away a little bit is fine!” The officials all nodded in assent and threw daggers with their eyes at Minister Liu, as if he was a sinner who had committed a crime that caused public wrath.

Seeing that Minister Liu wanted to say something, Zhu Junfan quickly said, “Chief Steward Su, pass on our order to summon the father and daughter of the Yu Family to the capital! Beloved Official Liu, we will assign the father and daughter to work under you, specializing in farming. Do you still be worried about not having high-yield seeds in the future? Perhaps, in the future, there will also be improved varieties of rice and millet...”

As soon as he heard that the father and daughter of the Yu Family, who were farming experts, were assigned to the Ministry of Revenue, Minister Liu was so happy that it seemed like he had picked up eight hundred taels. He no longer worried about the eight thousand catties of wheat kernels. As the emperor had said, with the two treasures, there would definitely be a lot of improved variety of wheat seeds in the future!

After the court session ended, Minister Liu stopped and asked all sorts of questions to Royal Prince Yang, who was the most familiar with the father and daughter of the Yu Family. Zhu Junyang was so annoyed with him that he almost exploded in anger. In the end, Minister Liu went back to official business, “Royal Prince Yang, did Miss Yu say whether these wheat kernels could continue to produce high yield?”

Zhu Junyang had asked the same thing to Xiaocao before, and Xiaocao's reply was, “If it's the first generation of seeds, then I can guarantee that an output of at least five to six hundred catties. However, I can't guarantee the same for the second generation of seeds.”

She was also clueless. The spiritual energy of the mystic-stone water could help germination and heading of the seeds. Hence, the yield wouldn't be too bad. But, if the kernels were used as seeds, she didn't know whether they could continue to produce a high yield.

Zhu Junyang also answered Minister Liu in the same way. Minister Liu felt somewhat disappointed in the answer, but if the first generation could be high yielding, then the second generation shouldn't be too bad either. It would at least be better than normal seeds. Besides, even if the kernels couldn't be used as seeds again, they definitely didn't have to worry about not being able to sell them. At least the grinded flour of the wheat could make delicious food!

The next day, Zhu Junyang used the excuse that he needed to supervise the corn cultivation at Tanggu Town's plantation to leave the capital. At that time, Zhu Junfan had jokingly scolded, "A man's heart leans towards outsiders. It's hard to keep a grown son at home!"

This younger cousin of his always ran to the Tanggu area whenever he had time. Although he always successfully completed all his assigned tasks, he always finished them within the shortest amount of time possible. In addition, he would ask for a vacation right after he finished his tasks. He would run off to Tanggu Town, refusing to work. In the past, he had thought that this kid was very filial and freed up time to accompany his lady mother. However, it now seemed that the fellow began to understand how to please girls.

The stinky brat had quite keen eyes. His little transmigrator friend was still just a budding flower, but he had already started guarding her all the time, for fear that she would be taken away by someone with the same keen eyes!

Zhu Junfan thought of the five thousand taels that he had been cheated of and couldn't help but feel angry. That stinky brat had actually let the little girl from the Yu Family manage the eight hundred mu of fields at Tanggu. It seemed that in order to please the young girl, his younger cousin had gone all in. He had given away the eight hundred mu of farmlands without hesitation and reluctance.

Ay! Now, he, the Emperor, should be the one whose heart ached. The brat didn't lower the price even a bit for the nearly fifty thousand catties of wheat kernels and sold them to the imperial court at market price. Moreover, he even had an expression as if he got taken advantage of. It was wheat kernels produced by the Yu Family's farmstead, but fifty copper coins per catty was expensive ah! It almost seemed like the brat was unwilling to sell them for just fifty copper coins per catty!

He was resigned to his fate and took out five thousand taels from the Imperial Treasury to give to the brat. No matter how difficult it was for his country, he couldn't let his people suffer ah! Zhu Junfan strongly suspected that the brat had an ulterior motive. If the plantation at Tanggu belonged to him, would he really be that shameless to take his imperial older cousin's money? That stinky brat was very cunning!

The five thousand taels of banknotes, which caused the emperor's heart to ache for a few seconds, was currently in Yu Xiaocao's hands. Her pair of big eyes were full of confusion as she looked at the young royal prince, 'My lord, what do you mean?'

“What are you looking at? Are you trying to compete with this prince to see whose eyes are bigger?” Zhu Junyang poked her forehead with his index finger. He thought that her cute expression was very adorable, and he really wanted to pinch her tender cheeks.

“This money... You're giving it to me?” Seeing Zhu Junyang nod, Xiaocao continued to ask, “Why?”

Those who liked money would have a proper way to get it! She didn't want this money that came from an unknown source! It wasn't like she lacked money!

“At such a young age, your memory is quite worrying ah!” Zhu Junyang teased her with a gorgeous smile on his face, and then he continued, “This prince has already given you the deed for the eight hundred mu of farmlands as a betrothal gift, did you forget?”

“Betrothal gift? When did you say you were giving me the farmlands? How come I didn't know about this?” Yu Xiaocao still had a bewildered expression on her face and didn't dare to withdraw her hands, which were holding the banknotes.

“If I'm not giving them to you, then why did I give you the title deed?” Zhu Junyang didn't know what to do with this little muddlehead. Although he didn't directly say it at that time, he felt that his intentions were very obvious. She agreed to his pursuit and he gave her the title deed. In the future, everything that belonged to him would be hers. Wasn't that very clear?

The corner of Yu Xiaocao's mouth twitched and she whispered, “I thought that you just wanted me to help you keep it for you! I thought you wanted me to help manage the fields more often...”

“Little muddlehead!” Zhu Junyang pinched her nose dotingly, and then said, “Do you understand now? Aren't you going to quickly put away the money?”

“But...we agreed at that time that if you found another girl that you liked, then we would split up. If you give me all land and money, you will regret it in the future! I won't give it back ah!” She didn't know that, in Zhu Junyang's eyes, she looked like a spoiled kitten when she threatened people. She was scratching people with her palm rather than her claws.

Zhu Junyang's heart softened. He ruffled her hair and said with a smile, "Rest assured, this prince has a very small heart, which can only hold you. Don't worry about me falling for someone else! This prince doesn't even want to take another look at those pampered noble young ladies in the capital!"

"You're wrong. In fact, all girls are angels who are lovely in their own ways. You can't generalize everyone just because of one special case!" Yu Xiaocao felt that the young royal prince had the wrong mentality. There were so many noble young misses and girls from humble families in the capital, so there must be one that suited him. How would he know about their good sides if he didn't even try to understand them?

"Angel? Messenger from the heavens?" Zhu Junyang was already used to the weird terms that came from her mouth from time to time. He shook his head and said, "Let's leave those angels for others because this prince already has an angel sent from the heavens to save me." As he said that, he looked at Xiaocao affectionately with his charming phoenix eyes.

'Devilish! He's too devilishly handsome!' Yu Xiaocao got goosebumps from his staring. She quickly lowered her head, folded the banknotes, and carefully put them into her money pouch. Zhu Junyang felt very helpless, 'When will my little lass understand ah?'

When corn and potatoes were planted in the plantation at Tanggu, several leaves of the leafy greens in the Yu Family's farmstead's twenty mu of vegetable fields had already grown out. In a few more days, they should be ready to be reaped and sold.

When Yu Xiaocao spread the news in Tanggu Town and the prefectural city that her family had planted vegetables, many people had been keeping an eye on them! There was no need to mention Zhenxiu Restaurant. There were also many famous restaurants and some old customers from Tanggu Town who expressed their desire to purchase the vegetables grown in the Yu Family's farmstead.

Twenty mu of vegetable fields should be more than enough to supply the entire Tanggu Town and several restaurants in the prefectural city. Yu Hai had already signed a supply agreement with them, but they kept the practice of not providing delivery services. If they wanted to buy vegetables, then they needed to send a cart over. The Yu Family was only responsible for picking and loading the vegetables onto the carts, but not delivery!

Had it been another vegetable farmer, they would definitely send the vegetables all the way to their kitchens if they managed to get one of those families as their customers. They would be afraid that their services weren't good enough and that the customers wouldn't buy their vegetables. The Yu Family, on the other hand, were big shots. Well, who told them to have such delicious and high-quality vegetables?

In order to get a chance to purchase the Yu Family's vegetables, those normally smug and respected stewards in Tanggu Town spoke in a soft, humble manner with a flattering smile. Not to mention that there was no delivery service, but they wouldn't dare to refuse even if they were ordered to personally go gather the vegetables in the fields. What could they do when it was considered an honor in Tanggu Town to be able to eat the vegetables produced by the Yu Family? They were just that amazing!

Since the plantation and farmstead were both on track, the father and daughter pair went back to Dongshan Village to check on the progress of their house. As for the job of picking and selling vegetables after they were put on the market, Yu Xiaocao asked the steward of the plantation to help keep an eye on them. If they lacked manpower, he could hire some short-term or long-term workers, and he could also set the wage. Yu Xiaocao felt quite at ease with this steward.

He had come from the Prince Jing's Estate. To be able to become a steward, he naturally had his own abilities. After Zhu Junyang gave away the eight hundred mu plantation, he also gave away the slave contracts of the steward and servants of the plantation. Now, this steward worked for the Yu Family.

Steward Wang was very clear about his own position. His royal prince cared deeply about Miss Yu, and he was very determined to have her be his wife. Although he was given away as a servant, he would be able to return to work under his master when Miss Yu married over. In order to help his master to please Miss Yu, he must work even harder. If he ruined the royal prince's matter, he might sell him in a rage in the future. At that time, there was no use to even cry. His entire family worked in the Prince Jing's Estate. Even the doorkeeper of the Prime Minister's Estate was considered a seventh-rank official, so it was such a great honor to be able to work in the prince's estate. He couldn't ruin his entire family's future.

Steward Wang did his best and worked wholeheartedly, and thus Yu Xiaocao trusted him even more. Not only was he responsible for the matters of the plantation, but he also helped keep an eye on the farmstead's vegetable fields. In actuality, as a steward, he didn't need to do everything himself and he just needed to have a good grasp of the situation. His assistants, who he had trained for a long time, weren't just used as a piece of art. But, since Miss Yu attached great importance to the vegetable fields, he must visit more often and help his future mistress keep an eye on them!

Fields of Gold Chapter 413 - Ethereal

“By the decree of the emperor, father and daughter, Yu Hai and Yu Xiaocao are to enter the capital to meet His Imperial Majesty!” Su Ran's figure stood firmly and appeared very spirited and radiant. He gave off the feeling as though he were a banished immortal that was above the common folk.

“This commoner (commoner girl) accepts this decree. Many thanks to the Emperor!” As it was his first time receiving an imperial decree, Yu Hai was a bundle of nerves and almost did not manage to stand up

from the ground as he had gone weak in the knees. It was only after Yu Xiaocao supported him that he was able to hold the imperial decree in his trembling hands.

Yu Xiaocao glanced at the smiling Zhu Junyang who stood behind Su Ran. The both of them had their own distinctive features. In terms of appearance, one was devilishly charming and the other was otherworldly clean. One emitted a cold aura, while the other warm...they were both extremely beautiful men who were very pleasing to the eye.

Noticing Yu Xiaocao's gaze, a comforting smile appeared on Zhu Junyang's cold face and he nodded at her, as though telling her that it was a good thing. Just as he smiled, flowers bloomed and the wind of spring blew for five kilometers, stunning Yu Xiaocao who thought that she was already immune to his charm.

'It's already come to such a situation, yet she still has the mood to appreciate beautiful men?' Seeing that his youngest daughter gave no reaction even though so much time had passed, Yu Hai took out a piece of banknote worth 500 taels from his sleeve and reluctantly presented it to Chief Steward Su, stuttering, "Chief...Chief Steward Su, this is a small token of my appreciation..."

Su Ran glanced at the Yu Residence that was undergoing renovation. He did not reach out for the banknote in Yu Hai's hand. Instead, he smiled, making them feel as if they were bathing in the wind of spring, "Master Yu need not be so courteous."

Yu Hai was a little undecided about whether or not he should keep the banknote. 'Could it be that Chief Steward Su thought the amount was too little? That could be the case, since he is the emperor's most trusted chief steward. Which side of society has he not seen? Why would he care for these mere 500 taels from his family? Ai...he should've taken out 2 pieces of banknotes just now,' Yu Hai felt very regretful ah!

Casually, Yu Xiaocao took the banknote from her father's hand and forcibly stuffed it into Su Ran's fair and delicate hands. She somewhat shamelessly smiled at him, "Sir Su, we've troubled you to come so far from the capital, so just take this money as Xiaocao treating you to tea!"

Su Ran lightly pushed the banknote back. He did not seem to have used much strength, but it had managed to easily push away Xiaocao's enthusiastic little hand. He smiled slightly and his voice sounded gentle and warm as he spoke, "Miss Xiaocao, if you sincerely want to treat me to tea, then you should personally brew the pot of tea yourself. The country wild tea you brewed last time for the 'heir of Prince Jing' was quite lovely. It would be even better if it was accompanied by desserts!"

Seeing that he was adamant about not receiving the banknote, Yu Xiaocao knew that it would not look good if she continued to persist, so she went with the flow and kept the banknote. She stuffed it into her pouch and said to Chief Steward Su, "Sir Su, my home is undergoing renovation, so it's a little more chaotic than usual. Please..."

"Please rest in the manor, Chief Steward Su..." Zhu Junyang flashed a smile at Yu Xiaocao, smoothly continuing her sentence.

Su Ran's gaze moved between Zhu Junyang and Yu Xiaocao for a few times before he let out a faint smile, "That's also good. Since I've come to Dongshan Village, it is expected that I go and greet the princess consort..."

Towards the rest of the Yu Household who were at a loss, Yu Xiaocao said, "Father, you should go and pack your bags for the capital. Mother, can you see if we have any specialty products for us to bring to Godmother? Godmother likes to eat the bacon and dried fish that we make..."

Hearing the words of their daughter, the two of them were akin to waking up from a dream and immediately started to busy themselves. When he heard that he had to enter the capital to meet the emperor, Yu Hai was so nervous he tensed up completely and even walked awkwardly. His arms and legs would not listen to his commands, and his brain was also near giving up! He never thought that he would be able to have the opportunity to meet the emperor in the years he was alive. It was a real-life emperor, not the ones that appeared in operas! His life was now without any regrets!

Madam Liu was a little tentative, so she turned towards her husband after the figures of Chief Steward Su, Royal Prince Yang and her youngest daughter disappeared into the stone pathway covered by trees, whispering, "Xiaocao's father, why do you think the emperor wants to meet us? Is it a good thing or a bad thing?"

Yu Hai was also a little lost, replying with uncertainty, "I'm also not sure...Cao'er has followed Chief Steward Su. If she were here, even if she didn't know the reason, with her cleverness she'd still be able to make an approximate guess."

The old village head, who had accompanied the Yu Household to receive the imperial decree, held it in his trembling hands as he observed it. He was actually fortunate enough to be able to receive the imperial decree twice during his time as the village head! Even though the imperial decree was not

directed at him, he still felt proud regardless. The first time he received the imperial decree, Hunter Zhao's family went to the capital and he even became a general. This time, the Yu Family was about to rise to new heights with this imperial decree!

He reverentially returned the imperial decree to the Yu Family, smiling as he comforted Yu Hai and his wife, "Don't panic. You see, the person who came to read the imperial decree is the chief steward. His expression was calm and treated your family warmly, and even Royal Prince Yang's face had a hint of a smile—it's definitely not a bad thing! Eldest nephew, good things are coming your way! When the time comes, don't forget to look after our Dongshan Village!"

"Village Head is exaggerating! I'm only a farmer, how could I be capable of looking after the village?" Yu Hai felt calmer now that he had heard what the village head had said.

The village head smiled, his bearing now even warmer, "I'm guessing that your family did a great deal last time when we fought off the Wokou pirates. Regardless, if it weren't for Xiaocao, our village would be faced with the threat of destruction like the neighboring village. If your Xiaosha hadn't risked his life to relay the news to the garrison, they wouldn't be able to arrive in time and the harbor would've been awash with the blood of merchants, and their goods would be plundered, causing a huge loss! Considering your family's contribution, the emperor will surely reward you with a lot of good things when you arrive at the capital, maybe even a noble title or something..."

"I'll borrow your auspicious words!" Surrounded by fellow villagers who looked at him with gratitude and envy, Yu Hai cupped his hands together and made a deep obeisance before he went back to the Zhao Residence to prepare the luggage he was to bring to the capital. Madam Liu also followed him up the mountain as the dried meat and preserved ducks and chickens in the icehouse had not been ransacked by the Wokou pirates. She could still pack some for them to bring to Xiaocao's godmother.

When Xiaocao's godmother heard of the Wokou pirates' invasion, she had hurriedly delivered an entire cart of supplies from the capital. The supplies included food, clothes and all of their necessities. She even sent a thousand taels over for fear that they would be short of money because the village was completely ransacked. Her daughter was fortunate to have gotten such a sincere godmother. They did not have anything valuable to give her, and she did not lack anything in the capital. Thus, Madam Liu prepared some of their local products for Xiaocao's godmother to enjoy.

Su Ran, Zhu Junyang and Xiaocao casually walked on the path in the forest. In the early summer, the hot sun blazed in the sky, but a cool and slightly humid breeze could be felt along the shady path, giving them a comfortable feeling. Green was all that filled their sights, and when they turned around for a

look, the blue surface of the ocean seemed like a badly-polished mirror. The blues of the sky and the sea blended together until no one could tell where the line was in which they met.

“This seems like a good place to retire!” A light breeze carried the edge of Su Ran's pristine robes, making it seem as though he could fly away with the wind at any moment. Xiaocao could not help but stare!

Zhu Junyang felt sour in his heart. His little lass used to only stare at him, but now she was 'cheating' on him right in front of his eyes? This was too outrageous! He coughed heavily, reminding that little lass who watched other men until she forgot herself—be reserved!

His cough did not pull the little lass back from her daze, but instead attracted the attention of Su Ran, who had been appreciating the view. He followed the jealous gaze of Royal Prince Yang, only to see that little lass lost in a daze as she stared at him. He outstretched his long hand that could be compared to that of a pianist's and waved it in front of Xiaocao's face, smiling, “Miss Xiaocao, what are you thinking about?”

“Sir Su...is like a god from the heavens who is above the common folk...” Xiaocao mumbled her thoughts as though she was hypnotized. She quickly realized what she had said and her face immediately reddened. She lowered her head and pretended to be a quail.

Bright laughter erupted from Su Ran. Since he was young, his appearance had only attracted vulgar, greedy and lustful desires. He had become the emperor's most trusted chief steward and even first-rank officials had to be courteous with him, but he could still feel a lot of jealous and contemptuous gazes behind his back. It was actually his first time receiving such unadulterated appreciation and compliments. He was touched, but he also felt rueful.

Yu Xiaocao was not aware, but Zhu Junyang knew very well that Chief Steward Su Ran's biggest taboo was comments about his appearance. Many of those high-ranking officials who desired him as their male bed-servant because of his looks had eventually lost their position and died very horribly. The little lass was so blatant she was only one step away from saying he was beautiful. If he continued to let her speak, he did not know what kind of shocking words would come out of her mouth.

Zhu Junyang quickly took a step forward and blocked Chief Steward Su Ran's line of sight. He wanted to say something to help the little lass justify herself, but he heard Chief Steward Su say with a smile, “Miss Xiaocao's culinary skills are so extraordinary that even the imperial cooks hold you in high esteem. If Su Ran doesn't eat cooked food, wouldn't that mean I wouldn't be able to taste Miss Xiaocao's craft? Wouldn't I be missing out on a lot of delicacies?”

'Eh? Eh? Chief Steward Su Ran wasn't smiling out of anger, right? He even has the mood to joke around, he probably isn't mad at the little lass, right?'

Zhu Junyang hurriedly spoke before Xiaocao could respond, "Let Xiaocao make some signature dishes for Chief Steward Su this afternoon as an apology..."

"Apology? Royal Prince Yang has exaggerated!" Su Ran's gaze lightly brushed over Zhu Junyang, seemingly slightly colder than before. He turned around and continued to stare at the place where the sky met the sea, feeling as though his mind had broadened just by watching the vast ocean.

Yu Xiaocao was left confused. She glared at him and crinkled her nose as she whispered, "Why should I apologize to Sir Su? I didn't do anything wrong! Don't blindly cut into our conversation. Can't you see that Sir Su's mood was quite good before, but now he's displeased because you decided to cut in?"

Zhu Junyang also felt that Su Ran was not as happy as he was just now. He tried to focus his attention to sense Chief Steward Su's thoughts, but she had a sudden realization. Eunuchs were always placed lower than the common folk. Even if he was a trusted and favored eunuch, many people still disdained him behind his back even though they treated him courteously. Chief Steward Su had experienced so much of this that it was natural that he had a deep understanding of the complexity and viciousness of the human heart.

Fields of Gold Chapter 414 - The Beautiful Yearning in His Heart

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The little lass was pure at heart. In her eyes, Chief Steward Su was just like everyone else, and she would naively appreciate his appearance and get close to him because of his aura. Every reaction of hers towards Chief Steward Su was purely because of himself, not his identity, and she was sincere in her every compliment and gaze. As such, Chief Steward Su treated her differently.

"Sir Su, this place backs the mountains while facing the sea while the surroundings are beautiful and the feng shui is exceptional. When Sir Su retires, you can come here to pass off the rest of your days." Seeing that Su Ran liked this ocean view, Yu Xiaocao's eyes flickered before she grinned broadly, "Sir Su, can I recite you a poem?"

Su Ran turned around, a warm smile on his face as he looked at her, "Oh? You also know how to recite poems?"

“Don't underestimate me. At the very least, I've studied for two years with my county official little brother!” Yu Xiaocao adorably rolled her eyes, clearing her throat, “From tomorrow onwards, become a blissful man,

Feed horses, chop firewood, traverse the world;

From tomorrow onwards, care for grain and vegetables;

I have a house, facing the sea, with spring blossoms."

Give every winding river and every mountain an endearing name.

Stranger, I, too, wish you happiness,

I wish for you a glittering path ahead,

I wish for you to meet your lover, make a home,

I wish for you to receive happiness in this world,

I only wish to face the sea, with spring blossoms..." [1]

Zhu Junyang secretly held his breath, resisting the urge to laugh. He did his best to maintain his emotionless face, but the slight tilt of the edge of his lips said otherwise, “Xiaocao, are you sure this is a poem?”

“You're so uncultured, do you even know how to appreciate the artistic concept of poems?” Yu Xiaocao threw him a disdainful look. In her previous life, this lyrical poem written by modern poet Hai Zi [2] had been spread among the people for a long time, and it expressed the poet's yearning for happiness in his loneliness and desolation. It was just right for Su Ran's current state of mind.

Su Ran faintly nodded his head, "Although Miss Xiaocao's poem seems more like an epode, it is comparatively freer than that. The artistic concept of the poem is clear yet deep, bright yet implicit, easygoing and hearty yet dignified and rich. It is indeed a rare, good piece."

'Facing the sea in the warmth of spring while the flowers bloomed.' It was such a beautiful yearning. Perhaps it was the average little warmth that he longed for in his heart, but would never obtain. Su Ran took one last look at the calm ocean waters before he turned around and continued his steady ascent uphill on the stone steps.

Among the favored eunuchs recorded in history, how many of them were actually able to smoothly retire? Most of them were unjustly blamed for the emperor. They became the person who had bewitched the emperor into his misdoings, and even in death they did not have a place to rest in peace. Right now, the emperor was still young. He was wise and loved his people, but what about the future? The human heart changed easily, so who knew what would happen in the future? 'Facing the sea in the warmth of spring while the flowers bloomed.' Perhaps it would be the only yearning in his heart.

"Sir Su, I think you're more fit to be a recluse—living in the mountains facing the sea, a peach blossom tree beyond your door, and beneath the tree, a guqin..." Yu Xiaocao felt moved by the scene she drew. Ah! A person who was akin to a banished immortal, playing his guqin as he sat beneath the brilliant peach blossoms, the breeze caressing his long hair as the edge of his clothes danced with the petals of the peach blossoms...it was such a wonderful scene.

Su Ran climbed the steps quietly, slowly, as though by doing this, he would be able to get closer to the peaceful life she had made up, to the beautiful yearning in his heart. The edges of his lips faintly curled upwards, and it was as if he was no longer the person who commanded the emperor's hidden guards. He was no longer the head steward who could flood the court with blood in a split second, but instead a recluse who secluded himself in the forests, with a jug of wine in hand while he was surrounded by flowers, lying drunk in a forest of peach blossoms...

In Prince Jing's West Mountain manor, Su Ran stood to leave after he greeted Princess Consort Jing and drank the tea that Xiaocao had personally brewed. He was afraid that he might feel more and more reluctant to leave if he stayed even a while longer...Perhaps it was time he found a successor.

Before leaving Dongshan Village, he stood in front of his white, immaculate steed and passed a jade pendant to Yu Xiaocao, smiling as he said gently, "When you arrive at the capital, if you meet a situation that you can't resolve, take this jade pendant to Eastern Dwelling Distillery. As long as it's within my capabilities, I'll definitely help you!"

Yu Xiaocao took the jade pendant into her hand joyfully. It looked like an ordinary double-fish jade pendant, but the letter 'Su' was carved on the back of it. Was it Sir Su's personal seal? Sir Su was the emperor's trusted head steward. With his backing, she could parade about the capital without fear!

“Many thanks to Sir Su. Here is some peach blossom wine that we made ourselves, and peach blossom tea that I personally crafted. If you don't disdain this gift, bring it back and try it!” It wasn't polite to be gifted something and have nothing to give back in return. She didn't have anything else on hand. This homemade wine and hand-crafted tea could help maintain the good health and youthful appearance of the consumer, and they were quite excellent in taste. Besides, it was the sincerity behind the gift that mattered, not the price, right?

Of course, Su Ran would not disdain the gift. He smiled, replying, “There's no one in the capital who isn't aware that the peach blossom tea in the general's residence is fragrant, delicious to drink and even helps to maintain a youthful appearance and remove freckles. It was rumored that Lady Fang's freckles from her pregnancy had completely disappeared as a result of drinking this tea. Not only that, but she even seemed to have become a few years younger. Her complexion is much better than before. So this peach blossom tea that's so hard to procure is actually the craft of Miss Xiaocao!”

Yu Xiaocao had no idea that the peach blossom tea she had asked her godfather to bring to his wife had caused such a big sensation in the capital. She was happy, and also fortunate that her godmother had not told anyone of the origins of the peach blossom tea. Otherwise she would never be able to live her life here peacefully!

When she raised her head, she saw Sir Su's gaze that was filled with laughter and cleared her throat, “This peach blossom tea not only helps to maintain one's youthful appearance, but it also helps to dredge meridians and replenish qi and blood...and this peach blossom wine will help to prevent diseases if you drink a small cup of it twice every day in the morning and at night.”

“Alright, I appreciate Miss Xiaocao's sincerity. In the future, I will definitely follow Miss Xiaocao's instructions and drink a small cup of it every morning and night.” Although Su Ran still had his doubts about the effectiveness of the wine as the little miss had claimed, he instinctively felt that there were only benefits to be gained from drinking this peach blossom wine.

Once Su Ran left, Xiaocao hurriedly returned to pack her things for the trip to the capital. Naturally, Zhu Junyang would not leave her alone and accompanied her along, fearful that the little lass would be anxious.

Although she was a little tentative, Xiaocao was still calmer than her father after she found out from the young prince that their summons to the capital this time was a good thing. After all, she had entered the imperial palace and met the emperor and empress before. Oh, right, and the emperor emeritus, that adorable and esurient old man. She believed that even if she made a few mistakes in her speech, the emperor and empress would not take it to heart. She had, after all, helped the little imperial prince before!

She dismounted from her horse in front of the general's residence. When the page saw Xiaocao's figure, he hurriedly ran inside to notify the madam. After a short period of chaos, Lady Fang appeared with Zhenzhu and Linglong following behind her, along with an entire crowd of her courtyard's servants.

Yu Xiaocao went up to greet her, but was instead pulled into an embrace by Lady Fang. Lady Fang lightly slapped her back twice, chiding, "You heartless little lass! It's as though telling you to come to the capital is equivalent to harming you! Every time, you only send things to me, but don't you realize that no matter how many things you send me, it doesn't hold a candle to you coming here personally? I missed you so much!"

Xiaocao's eyes felt warm. Seeing her godmother's eyes turn red, she quickly turned towards the plump little boy in the arms of a nanny who stood behind Lady Fang, "Yo, is this our Little Linlin? He's so big already! He's quite handsome; luckily he doesn't look like Godfather..."

The little boy Fang Haolin, had been curiously eyeing the little miss in his mother's embrace. Seeing her look in his direction, he shyly turned his head away.

"You dare say! The last time you saw your little brother was on his first birthday. Only now, when he's nearly two years old does he get to meet his older sister! You see, Little Linlin doesn't even recognize you anymore!" Lady Fang was full of grievances as she glared harshly at her goddaughter. She rarely got to see this little lass. If it wasn't for the food that she sent to her once in a while, she would've thought that this lass had already forgotten about her godmother!

"Hee hee! It's my fault, okay? This time, I brought you some peach blossom wine, and several catties of peach blossom tea. If you can't finish them, then you can give them to the other madams that you're usually closer to. Not to mention the peaches we planted last year—quite a lot of them bore fruit this year, but it's not so easy to transport, so I only brought one basket full of them. I carried them on my back the entire journey to the capital, afraid that others might bruise them if they were careless. The other peaches had been canned and there's enough for you to enjoy for a whole year!" With a pleasing tone, Yu Xiaocao offered the peaches to Lady Fang like she was presenting treasures.

Although the peach tree in the Yu Residence's back courtyard was actually a wild peach tree that was dug out from the mountain, it still couldn't 'withstand' the mystic-stone water that she watered it with every day. Not only did its flowers bloom beautifully, but the peaches it bore were also very big. The pink peaches were as big as the fist of an adult and emitted an enchanting fragrance. The peaches were also imbued with some spiritual energy that benefited the human body.

Perhaps it was because the little boy, Fang Haolin, had been fed the mystic-stone water by Xiaocao before when he was younger, but he was more sensitive to this kind of spiritual energy. His head immediately turned back and he stared unblinkingly at the peaches in Xiaocao's hands. Yu Xiaocao used the mystic-stone water in her water bag to wash a peach. Then, she held it in front of the little fellow.

Fang Haolin shyly looked at the somewhat familiar yet unfamiliar older sister in front of him, and slowly, a bashful smile blossomed on his face. Without saying whether he wanted it or not, he stared fixedly at the peach.

Then, as though he was tempted by the fragrance of the peach, he slowly outstretched his little 'paw'. He wasn't able to hold it in one hand, so he extended his other arm and, with both hands, held the peach to his chest. The smile on his face grew even sweeter.

Only then did Lady Fang notice that Royal Prince Yang had been accompanying Yu Xiaocao, and hurriedly went forward to greet him. Zhu Junyang stopped her, smiling as he said, "Lady Fang doesn't need to be so courteous! Xiaocao will need to enter the imperial palace to meet the emperor tomorrow, so she should rest early today. I'll come pick her up tomorrow morning!"

They escorted Royal Prince Yang out the door, and then Lady Fang arranged for Yu Hai to settle in the outer courtyard. Fang Zizhen also returned to the capital yesterday, and, at the moment, he had been summoned to the imperial palace by the emperor for questioning. When he returned a while later, the two of them would have a good drink together.

Xiaocao and Lady Fang were crowded into the inner courtyard. The little fellow, Fang Haolin, held the big peach in his grasp and smelled it with his nose, but he didn't bite into it. Once they were within the inner courtyard, the servants dissipated once they greeted Yu Xiaocao, and only Wutong and Pipa were left to serve her.

Fields of Gold Chapter 415 - The Adorable Fang Haolin

At this time, Fang Haolin, who had been placed on the floor, secretly glanced at Yu Xiaocao before he toddled towards Lady Fang. He did his best to outstretch his chubby little arms that looked like lotus roots, cutely saying, "Mommy, eat fruit!"

Lady Fang picked up her son and placed him on her lap. She shook her head and said, "Your sister gave you that, so you eat it!"

Little Linlin stubbornly put the peach to her mouth, "Linlin eat after Mommy eat!"

"Godmother, Linlin is so filial. You should just take a bite!" Yu Xiaocao smiled sweetly as she looked at the little toddler, who was barely two yet already knew to first let his mother eat the good things. Although this little fellow was a little shy, his parents had taught him well.

Only after Lady Fang pretended to take a small bite into the top of the peach did Little Linlin happily eat the peach. The peach was full of juice and extremely sweet. Just by biting into the skin and lightly sucking it, a piece of sweet and juicy peach went into the little fellow's mouth.

'So yummy! It's even better than the cherries that Mommy bought before. Mm...it's almost as good as the watermelons that Older Sister sent from Tanggu Town!' Little Linlin secretly looked at his fair-skinned, doe-eyed older sister. 'So this is my older sister who lived in Tanggu Town. She's the one who can make delicious food, and often sends delicious pastries and fruits over to us, right? Older Brother Xuanxuan said that his older sister treated him very well and spent all her monthly allowance on him! Now that Linlin also has an older sister, will she also treat Linlin as good as Older Brother Xuanxuan's older sister does?'

Our little friend, Fang Haolin who was barely two years old, thought about all this as he ate the big peach, but he accidentally ate too much while he was distracted! He had gotten spleen-stomach disharmony recently. Moreover, he did not cooperate with the treatment. Therefore, he ended up rolling on the bed while clutching his stomach and wailing until tears and mucus streaked his face.

Lady Fang felt both amused and helpless. She resignedly gave out orders to brew the medicine, but the little fellow refused to take his medicine even though his stomach was in pain, "Mommy, Linlin doesn't want to drink that bitter medicine. I don't wanna, don't wanna!"

"If you don't drink the medicine, your stomach will hurt for the whole afternoon." Coaxing her son to take his medicine was a difficult task. Lady Fang saw the little fellow bury his head into his blanket while

leaving his wiggling little butt exposed outside, looking like a big, stupid caterpillar. Seeing this, she couldn't help but feel her head ache.

Our little friend, Fang Haolin also felt very aggrieved. His tummy was so painful, yet his mother still wanted to make him drink the bitter medicine. Was she even his biological mother? He hugged his stomach and wailed, "I don't wanna drink that bitter medicine. I wanna drink the sweet medicine that Older Sister sent!"

"Syrup is used to treat coughing, so it can't be used to treat your indigestion!" Madam Fang admonished earnestly, but the little fellow was barely two years old. Thus, he did not understand anything about using the right medicine for the right disease. Since he did not need to drink bitter medicine to treat cough, the same could be said for his stomachache!

"I want Older sister. Older sister is a doctor and she has medicine that isn't bitter!" Little Linlin's eyes brightened as he pulled his head out from under the blankets. His eyes that had been washed with tears now shone like the brightest star in the night sky. Didn't his mother say that his older sister was very skilled? Imperial physicians would only give bitter medicine to little children, but his older sister was able to make sweet-tasting medicine. Older Sister must be more skilled than imperial physicians!

"I hear that Little Linlin is looking for me. Why is Linlin looking for Older Sister?" Yu Xiaocao returned to the main courtyard after she got cleaned up and changed into another set of clothes in her courtyard. She did not expect to hear Fang Haolin wailing for her before she even entered the room. It seemed that she was still quite popular among children—she had not met him for almost a year yet Little Linlin was still quite close to this older sister of his!

When she entered the room, she noticed that Little Linlin had two streaks of tears running down his cheeks while he pitifully and somewhat shyly looked at her. The sight made her heart melt. She went up and held the little fellow who had a milky scent into her arms, gently and softly asking, "Little Linlin, why did you cry? Tell Older Sister, where are you feeling uncomfortable?"

'Older Sister's embrace is so fragrant and comfortable!' Our little friend, Fang Haolin buried his face into his older sister's embrace and deeply took in her scent. 'My tummy doesn't seem to hurt as much when I'm in Older Sister's embrace.' The little fellow stayed in Xiaocao's embrace, refusing to leave no matter how hard his mother tried to coax him. He even used an adorable tone to pitifully moan, "Older Sister, Linlin's tummy hurts..."

Xiaocao looked up at Lady Fang with a gaze filled with curiosity. Lady Fang felt angry yet amused as she watched her son 'rebel' and leap into her goddaughter's embrace. She glanced at him, saying, "He has some indigestion issues lately, but he forgot all about it because he was overcome with joy that you're here. This little guy must have overeaten after eating such a big peach!"

Fang Haolin nervously watched his older sister, lowering his head in embarrassment, 'Would Older Sister disdain him for being gluttonous and disown him?' The little fellow stared at his chubby fingers and the tears in his eyes threatened to fall at any moment.

Xiaocao lightly rubbed the little fellow's abdomen and softly said, "It's Older Sister's fault. I shouldn't have given you a whole peach. Older Sister will make you a cup of milk tea later, it can help digestion."

"Is milk tea bitter?" The little fellow was the most afraid of consuming something bitter. He blinked his doe-like eyes and looked at his older sister with a hopeful expression.

Xiaocao lightly tapped the tip of his nose, smiling, "It's not bitter; it's sweet and fragrant!"

"Mommy, you see! Older Sister has medicine that isn't bitter!" The little fellow Fang Haolin still had a drop of tear on his cheek as he broke into a smile.

Since Royal Prince Yang brought back a few dairy cows from his expedition to the western hemisphere, drinking milk became all the rage among many people in the capital. In a farmstead under the name of Royal Prince Yang, some dozen mu of farmland had been converted into pastures. Now, he already had more than twenty dairy cows and this dairy now supplied milk to the majority of the wealthy and powerful families in the capital.

Lady Fang had accepted her goddaughter's suggestion—not only did she make her son drink cow's milk even after stopping his intake of breast milk, she also persisted in drinking cow's milk. The benefits had already started to show after a period of time. Her body and bones became stronger, her sleep quality had improved, and her skin also became much more delicate than before. When combined with the effects of the peach blossom tea and wine that her goddaughter sent her, even her close friends who were younger than her now looked like her older sisters! They were so envious of her that they also began to drink cow's milk themselves!

Yu Xiaocao took the milk that they already had in store and boiled it with white sugar. Then, she added a few ladles of tea and a few drops of mystic-stone water. She let it cool down, and then served it to the little fellow, Fang Haolin. Perhaps it was the psychological effect, or the mystic-stone water's effect, but the little fellow quickly patted his stomach with a grin, "It doesn't hurt anymore. I'm cured! Older Sister is more skilled than the imperial physicians!"

"Don't speak these words carelessly! Be careful that you won't be able to invite any imperial physicians to treat your illness in the future!" Xiaocao pinched the little fellow's chubby face and couldn't resist kissing his cheek.

Little Linlin suddenly became bashful, hiding his face into his mother's embrace. 'Mommy doesn't smell as good as Older Sister, but...since Older sister kissed Little Linlin, does this mean Older Sister likes Little Linlin? Little Linlin also likes Older Sister!' He pulled away from his mother's embrace and said to his older sister, "Older Sister is skilled and makes delicious medicine that isn't bitter! Since I have Older Sister, I won't need imperial physicians to treat me in the future!"

"Then when Older Sister returns to Dongshan Village, who'll treat you when you fall sick?" Yu Xiaocao could not help but tease him.

Hearing this, Little Linlin's face creased up, tearing up, "Don't go back, Older Sister! Isn't it okay to just stay here, Older Sister?"

"See! Your little brother doesn't want to part with you, so you should stay in the capital for a few more days this time!" Lady Fang glared at her reprovingly. Ever since she returned to the capital to await labor, this busy goddaughter of hers had only visited her twice! What a heartless girl!

Yu Xiaocao rubbed her nose, laughing drily. All of a sudden, her gaze lit up as it landed on Little Linlin, "Godmother, Little Linlin is older now, so you can bring him to Tanggu Town! Now that they're winding-up the last few details of the harbor, Godfather would be busier and need to stay for a while longer at Tanggu Town. If you bring Linlin to Tanggu Town, he wouldn't have to worry about the two of you after work!"

After a moment's silence, Lady Fang raised her head and shot her a side-glance, "It's as though I'm trying to harm you by keeping you in the capital for a few more days! Now you've even come up with the idea of 'abducting' the two of us to Tanggu Town! Linlin, isn't your older sister bad?"

“Not bad! Go to Tanggu Town, find Daddy!” Little Linlin had gotten pertussis not long after he had been born, and even after Xiaocao had treated his illness, the servants of the General's Estate still treated him with the utmost care. The general and the madam were only able to conceive this golden child when they were nearing forty years of age, so the servants were naturally afraid that they did not serve well enough.

Little Linlin was almost two years old, but he had never gone out of the General's Estate before. He only had friends to play with when Lady Fang's close friends brought their own children over. It was why he was very attached to Older Brother Xuanxuan and Older Sister Juan'er. He often pestered Lady Fang, asking her why they had not come to play with him.

Once he heard that he could go to Tanggu Town to visit his father, Little Linlin was naturally very enthusiastic. Going to Tanggu Town was good because his father could come back home every day, and he could see his older sister much more often. He would be able to enjoy his older sister's pastries more frequently, too!

“You little traitor, you don't want your mother anymore once you see your older sister!” Lady Fang felt happy to see her son get close to her goddaughter so quickly, even to the point of attachment. She was already extremely grateful to be able to have a blood-relative like this in her lifetime. If this child was close with his older sister, he would have another family member in the future. Xiaocao had a mind of her own, so in the future when she and her husband passes away, the brother and sister duo would still be able to discuss matters with each other and be each other's support. This was what she hoped!

“Mommy! Linlin likes mommy the most! Linlin wants mommy, but Linlin also wants older sister!” Our little friend, Fang Haolin said cutely as he leapt into his mother's embrace and hugged her neck. The sweetness in his voice went straight to their hearts.

Lady Fang laughingly called him 'little flatterer' and teased him, “Then...if Mommy stays in the capital and Older Sister returns to Tanggu Town, will you stay here with me, or follow Older Sister to Tanggu Town to see Daddy?”

Fang Haolin's face was full of ambivalence. He looked at his mother, and then at his older sister who was smiling sweetly. He thought long and hard about it, until he eventually reluctantly said, “Then...Linlin will still stay in the capital with Mommy!”

“Why?” Yu Xiaocao pretended to be hurt, pressing her hand to her chest.

Little Linlin hurried to hug her in an effort to comfort her, “When Older Sister returns to Tanggu Town, Daddy will have Older Sister as company. Mommy is alone in the capital, so Linlin will stay and keep Mommy company!”

Lady Fang was touched. She hugged her son tightly, “Good son, Mommy hadn't pampered you for nothing!”

Fields of Gold Chapter 416 - The Forbidden City

Fang Zizhen had returned yesterday night and he taught his adopted family all that they had to know about the etiquette of the imperial palace. Both father and daughter had been woken up early in the morning today and, after a flurry of preparations, they rode a horse carriage to the Imperial City under Fang Zizhen's lead. Outside the Meridian Gate, they got off from the carriage.

Su Ran had already been waiting from behind the gates since dawn. Yu Xiaocao, who was originally a little unnerved because she had to meet the emperor in court, felt her body and soul relax once she saw the ever-graceful Sir Su standing there.

Sir Su was the head steward who took care of all the internal matters of the Imperial City and was the trusted aide of the emperor. Every single official that came to attend court smiled and saluted him courteously. What was there to be afraid of when he personally came to meet the two of them?

In any case, the whole court already knew that she and her father came from the countryside, so it was justifiable if they were lacking in the aspect of court etiquette, right? Yu Xiaocao's steps became lighter and lighter the more she thought about this, and her original reservedness turned into nonchalance.

Since there was still some time before court proceedings began, she slowed down in her footsteps and started to appreciate the sights of the Imperial City. Above the Meridian Gate sat a pavilion with double eaves that looked as though they were five phoenixes about to take off into the air. This was also why the Imperial City was called the Hall of Five Phoenixes.

Once she passed through the Meridian Gate, she saw five bridges made of white marble that passed over the moat. Paired with the majestic Meridian Gate and the brilliance of the buildings, they formed an enchanting painting. The intricately carved bridge railing that looked like white jade belts made Yu Xiaocao want to take down a piece to bring home and keep as a memento.

She caressed the white marble railing, reluctant to part with it. Yu Xiaocao was about to walk onto the center bridge that was carved with a coiling dragon when Su Ran pulled her back, pointing to the stone bridge to the right as he smiled, "That's our bridge. Only the emperor can cross on this center bridge. The court officials cross over on all the others..."

Realization hit Yu Xiaocao that moment, and she chanced another glance at the intricately carved coiled dragon. Even after she crossed the stone bridge, she still couldn't help but look back at it. Su Ran shook his head in amusement and slowed down in his footsteps, following Xiaocao's speed.

After they passed the five white marble bridges, they quickly arrived at a brilliant and magnificent palace. This was the Hall of Supreme Harmony that was depicted in countless dramas. She walked until she was at the wide platform in front of the hall. There, she saw copper turtles and cranes that were crafted so skilfully they looked almost alive. It was just as her younger brother from her previous life had told her when he came back from his visit to the Forbidden City. These graceful and magnificent copper statues represented the long reign of this nation! She honestly couldn't see the relation.

She stopped in her tracks and looked up. On the eaves of the roof of the palace sat a carving of an immortal sitting on a phoenix. Behind it, there were many small beasts of different forms, and every one of them was extremely lifelike. The glazed, golden yellow roof tiles of the palace, the bright red pillars and all the mix of the colors—it was just too much for her eyes to take in.

The throne room was where matters of the state were discussed, but now, there was actually a little girl who was relaxed and leisurely strolling about, as though she were strolling through her garden at home. All the officials that came to attend court gave her a sidelong glance. What surprised them even more was the fact that the person who was leading the little miss was actually Chief Steward Su who served the emperor!

What was the origin of this little miss? Even though the clothes and accessories made her look as though she was an official's daughter, they were ultimately still ordinary clothes and accessories! But Chief Steward Su was amiable towards her, even to the point of accommodation. Chief Steward Su's every action and word represented the emperor's intentions, so didn't this mean that the emperor thought highly of this unfamiliar little miss?

Look! Look! Isn't this little miss acting too casually? She actually dared to touch the copper crane in front of the Hall of Supreme Harmony! Did she think that this was a stroll in her own garden? And not only did Chief Steward Su not reprimand and stop her, but he was also smiling and even stood to the side to wait

for her! If they weren't aware that the emperor only had one five-year-old little princess, the court officials would believe that this little miss was actually the emperor's most favored princess!

Eh? It was possible! This little miss looked about ten years old, and the emperor loved to travel around the world before he took over the throne. Could it be that she was his daughter who had been lost among the commoners? The more they made up, the more the court officials believed their story to be true. If she was a daughter from the prestigious families of the capital, she would be careful with every action she made, especially when she entered the imperial palace. Which daughter of the capital's prestigious families would be like her and touch the beak of the copper crane with her small hand?

Many court officials couldn't help but slow down in their steps as they reached the platform in front of the Hall of Supreme Harmony, their eyes shining with gossip. At this moment, Minister Liu hurried up the steps. His gaze paused when he saw a spot of pink among the throng of court officials' robes. Recognizing the familiar figure, Minister Liu's face erupted into a grin, walking to the person that had attained the focus of all the court officials. He called out, "Miss Yu, long time no see! How are you?"

Hearing this, Yu Xiaocao turned around and saw Minister Liu. A smile broke out on her face as she said, "Official Liu! You're here to attend court?"

The crowd of court officials all thought, 'Isn't this a redundant question? If we're not here to attend court, then what are we doing?'

Su Ran noticed that Minister Liu seemed to have a lot to say to Xiaocao, so he hurried to cut them off before the other man could continue. Towards Yu Xiaocao, he asked warmly, "Miss Xiaocao, it's about time for court. Shall we enter the hall and await for the emperor?"

Yu Xiaocao nodded, smiling, "Sir Su, do you all attend court at this hour every time? It's so early! It seems that it's quite difficult no matter if you're the emperor or the court officials!"

Su Ran smiled faintly but didn't reply, simply gesturing for her to enter. Yu Xiaocao turned her head to look at her reserved father who had been quietly following behind her all this time, and comforted, "Father, don't be afraid! You've met the emperor before. He's quite a nice person. When the time comes, we'll just answer whatever he asks. If we can't answer, we can just shake our heads. We're only commoners after all, and we haven't seen any big affairs before, so it's completely understandable if we don't know!"

The officials that passed-by her gave her another sidelong glance when they heard her words. When in court, who didn't consider their answer over and over before they answered the emperor's questions? Who wasn't extremely careful with their words, afraid that they would say the wrong things if they were careless? This little miss said it so casually. Did you think that your family owned the court, that the emperor would 'play' with you?

After her conversation with Minister Liu, every court official now knew that Xiaocao was the little countryside lass who was skilled in agriculture. No wonder, after all, she was of low birth! Oh right, isn't this lass also the goddaughter of General Fang? Did General Fang and his wife not teach this little lass palace etiquette yesterday? It was not a surprise either. Fang Zizhen was so uncouth, so what would he know? It was enough if he didn't mess up himself! In a moment, they needed to watch as these peasants disgraced themselves in front of the emperor.

Those court officials that disagreed with the idea of awarding an official's rank to the Yu Family waited to watch the drama and their gazes lit up with epicaricacy. Zhu Junyang, who had been unable to pick up Xiaocao from the Fang Residence because he was late to leave his residence, felt the ill intent of the officials and couldn't help scrunching up his brows. His face turned cold as he took to standing beside Yu Xiaocao, using his actions to tell everyone else that he supported his little lass!

Yu Xiaocao leisurely came to the doors of the Hall of Supreme Harmony and looked inside. The emperor's imperial throne sat on top of the seven layered platforms in the Hall of Supreme Harmony. Naturally, as the emperor's throne, it was intricately carved and extremely lavish, and behind the throne was seven dividers that had carvings of clouds and dragons. There were about a dozen golden dragons coiled around the rim of the throne and the pattern of two dragons spitting a pearl was carved onto the base of the throne. The whole throne shimmered with gold, displaying the absolute pre-eminence of the person who sat on that treasured seat.

The moment she stepped into the hall, Yu Xiaocao noticed that all the civil and the military officials had already separated into two sides and lined up in an orderly fashion. There wasn't any space for her and her father to stand, so she dumbfoundedly asked, "Sir Su, where do we stand?"

At the side, an official with a thin beard wearing a set of dark red, second-rank court official's robes sneered, sliding his gaze over, "Where is there space for you to stand in this hall?"

"Official Yang! Don't you think your words are too much?" Zhu Junyang exuded a terrifying cold aura and his phoenix eyes filled with a growing darkness. An air of bloodlust seemed to engulf him, and even such an old and experienced official as Imperial Censor Yang was struck with terror.

No wonder Royal Prince Yang was said to be a devil. He was rumored to have a bad temper and not be able to recognize his own relatives when he was furious among the people of the capital. It seemed that the rumors were not groundless! Imperial Censor Yang shifted his eyes away, not daring to meet his gaze.

Chief Steward Su Ran lightly glanced over Imperial Censor Yang, 'This surnamed Yang seems to have gotten sick of being an official, always looking for trouble when there is none. It seems that it's about time for the hidden guards to do a sweep through the Yang Residence!'

He turned towards Xiaocao, softly saying, "You and your father will wait here. In a while, his imperial majesty will call your names and summon you. He'll casually ask you a few questions and then commend and reward you for your contributions. You don't have to be nervous; you definitely won't make a mistake if you maintain your composure!"

Yu Xiaocao nodded slightly, a look of obedience on her face, "Rest assured, Sir Su. I am aware of the gravity of the situation, I won't speak carelessly!"

Head Steward Su Ran smiled at her, and moved to the Hall of Central Harmony that was behind the Hall of Supreme Harmony with quick steps. The Hall of Central Harmony was the place where the emperor rested before attending court. At this time, he should already be there! When he entered the grand doors of the Hall of Central Harmony, he indeed saw the emperor who was wearing bright imperial robes sitting on one of the red sandalwood chairs.

"How was it? The little lass wasn't scared silly, right?" Seeing him enter, Zhu Junfan asked with a smile.

Su Ran recalled Yu Xiaocao's leisurely pace, and how she didn't show a hint of fear or worry as though she was strolling through her backyard and couldn't help but laugh, "Replying to Your Majesty, Miss Xiaocao is very...collected!"

Zhu Junfan raised his eyebrows, recalling the time when he had only transmigrated here and scorned the supposed rank restrictions and ideology on the distinguished and the humble. That lass probably had yet to experience the terrors of imperial authority, so naturally, she was still able to go about without much worry. At most, she would feel slightly unsettled as she was not familiar with this situation.

“That lass has always been quite bold. Junyang told me that he once almost lost control in front of her, but it was because she made impromptu jokes that he was pulled back to sanity! You've also witnessed Junyang's violence and the degree of terror he instills when he rages. The little lass didn't faint under those circumstances, so how could the mere atmosphere of entering the imperial palace to meet the emperor scare her?” Zhu Junfan was a little regretful. He wasn't present at that time, but he also wanted to witness how the little girl managed to subdue the cold-faced god of death.

Su Ran resignedly watched the fascinated emperor, softly reminding, “Your Imperial Majesty, it's time to attend court...”

Fields of Gold Chapter 417 - Atmosphere at Cour

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“The emperor has arrived——”

“May the emperor live for ten thousand years...” The civil and military officials all greeted the emperor in one voice. Yu Hai and Yu Xiaocao, who were in the back behind all of them, were stunned for a second and then kowtowed half a second later.

Zhu Junfan majestically walked in and stood in front of the intricately carved dragon throne as he glanced at the direction of the Yu Family's father and daughter pair. The corner of his mouth twitched into a smile as he lifted his right hand, “Rise my beloved officials!”

“Thank you, Your Imperial Majesty!” All of the officials came up and then respectfully stood in their places. Yu Xiaocao clumsily pulled herself up. Bowing down, kneeling, and then standing up was truly torturous. This society was too cruel for having a centralized monarchy and a culture that was heavily based on rank and status...

“If there are important affairs, bring up the memorials. If there's nothing to be said, then retreat——” Su Ran's voice sounded gentle and reserved and didn't have a hint of shrillness in it. He had a very soothing voice. Yu Xiaocao was short and couldn't see much over the heads of the officials. She wanted to clearly see the man who was sitting high up on the dais in the throne room, so she craned her neck to look.

Su Ran easily spotted the little head that was peeking through behind the orderly ranks of the civil officials. Because the head was slightly tilted, the dangling hair ornaments in that person's hair also swayed a few times. The little lass seemed to have sensed his eyes and naughtily grinned at him.

If Su Ran saw this, then Zhu Junfan, who was sitting next to him in a dignified manner, naturally also spotted this. He knew that his old transmigrator friend wasn't a cowardly and timid person. How could she be intimidated by the grand and splendid throne room? It was more likely that the little lass was taking this as a leisurely tour and enjoying the sights here.

Zhu Junfan spaced out for a bit while sitting on the throne. The official standing beneath him was reporting on the affairs of the people in Tanggu Town and the vicinity, so he only got the general gist of things. Following that, a few other officials sent up reports...Zhu Junfan occasionally took some time to glance at the little lass's head that was still curiously looking around the room. It was as if she was watching a play that was very interesting and engrossing. For some reason, her blatant curiosity rubbed him slightly the wrong way.

Finally, none of the officials in court brought up anything else. Zhu Junfan looked at his younger cousin and raised an eyebrow, 'Looks like you're quite patient today ah!'

Zhu Junyang noticed the emperor's gaze and stepped forward, "Your Imperial Majesty, the Yu Family's father and daughter are already outside the throne room. They're waiting in the back to be called in!"

His cousin was clearly lying through his teeth. That lass was clearly already inside the throne room. She had been craning her neck this whole time to see. At this rate, she was going to become a giraffe very soon!

Zhu Junfan silently roasted his cousin yet he acted in his usual dignified manner and announced, "Allow them in!"

Su Ran stood up straight and announced, "Bring the Yu Family inside the throne room!"

When Yu Hai heard this, his whole body trembled from head to toe. He felt like his limbs weren't listening to his mind anymore. The highest ranked official he had seen in his life was the county magistrate. Although General Fang and Royal Prince Yang both had relatively high positions, he only interacted with them privately and had never spoken with them in such a formal situation. Even though General Fang had given him a crash course on the court etiquettes when meeting the emperor, he was incredibly nervous and he felt like his head had turned into a bunch of useless mush at this time.

It was his daughter who roused him from his induced panic. As she walked by him, she lightly pulled at his sleeve and that action calmed him down a bit. He saw that his daughter had her head properly lowered and her two hands were modestly placed on her abdomen as she went forward in small steps. She easily traversed through the officials in front of them. Her entire demeanor was calm and collected and there was a slight smile on her face. Even the hair ornaments on her head didn't sway much as she walked forward.

Yu Hai felt a bit ashamed now. In front of such a grand occasion, his daughter must not be as calm as she seemed. As her father, he couldn't become his daughter's backbone and even required her to help him at such a crucial point. He was truly an incompetent father ah! With these thoughts running through his head, a burst of courage came up and he straightened his back and neck. His steps going forward had also become more steady.

The two of them didn't make a single mistake as they properly greeted the emperor. After the emperor absolved them, the father and daughter pair stood up straight. Zhu Junfan didn't say a word as he silently observed the reactions of the father and daughter pair in front of him. Although Yu Hai did his best to keep himself calm, he still had a hint of anxiety and frazzledness about him. This was the first time he was meeting the emperor and the first time he was in such a situation. His reactions were normal.

As for the Yu Family's little lass, she was only putting up an act. Every movement she made was as graceful and elegant as those noble young maidens in the capital. Not a single movement was wrong or out of place. But why did her actions rub him the wrong way? Ah! It was because, within her bones, there was a certain attitude. She was neither servile nor overbearing and was extremely calm and collected. In fact, she even had a hint of excitement. 'Little lass, don't think that because you have your head down that we cannot see your true expression!'

The emperor had called in the Yu Family's father and daughter inside yet hadn't said a word. The officials all looked at each other in dismay. Just what was going through the emperor's mind right now?

Zhu Junfan waited until he saw that Yu Hai was about to break from the pressure. Only then did he slowly start, "We've heard that you were the one who first discovered the presence of the Wokou pirates near Tanggu Town. Furthermore, you also warned the authorities there, is that correct?"

The most important person in the Great Ming Dynasty was asking him a question! Yu Hai opened his mouth and felt like there was something stuck in his throat. His heart pounded furiously as if it was going to jump out of his chest cavity. He reminded himself that he was a father and needed to bring honor to his children. He bowed and stammered, "In...in reply to Your Imperial Majesty..."

“In reply to Your Imperial Majesty! This subject has decent swimming skills and has signed a contract with the Zhou Family to help them obtain seafood. That day, this subject had unconsciously swam into the deep ocean and saw a fleet of around a hundred ships in the distance. They didn't look like merchant ships and also didn't look like navy ships from our Great Ming Empire. I thought it was a bit odd and secretly swam over to one of the ships. I found out that the people on the ships not only wore different clothing than us but I also couldn't understand what they were saying. They were absolutely not people from our country.”

“This subject once heard the elders from my village talking about the fact that Tanggu Town is not too far from a neighboring country. In the past, they had experienced Wokou pirates attacking them. In addition, in the past few days, there were the remnants of a typhoon that blew past us from the direction of that country. The people from that country likely encountered a natural disaster! This subject also heard that, in the previous dynasty, many commoners here had been forced to become bandits after natural disasters struck where they lived. Thus, this subject wondered if the people in that country decided to become pirates due to the disaster and were coming to our Great Ming Dynasty to steal things from us! Thus, I swam back with all my might to warn my village chief.”

“This subject's godfather is in charge of the construction of the harbor and I was worried about his safety. I had my older brother ride a steed at top speed to warn him. It was this subject's adopted father who made the prompt decision to inform the authorities. By doing so, they managed to organize all of the soldiers in the area and snatched the opportunity to protect the docks when the pirates struck!”

Yu Xiaocao was quite tired from her speech. Speaking in such a formal and flowery manner was not a strength of hers. However, if she spoke too directly, would that cause problems for her godfather and godmother? After all, she had spent quite a bit of time learning the proper etiquette and manners of a well-bred maiden from her godmother. Her godmother had spent quite a bit of effort to teach her how to become a noble maiden!

“From what you're saying, this great effort and contribution is all thanks to your godfather, who was overseeing the construction of the harbor!” Zhu Junfan had a slight smile on his face as he looked towards the military officials to find a certain someone.

Yu Xiaocao didn't have a single hint of wanting to pull glory onto herself as she modestly replied, “In reply to Your Imperial Majesty, the successful defense of the docks was from the joint efforts of Commander Sun and General Fang. Furthermore, the soldiers of the county and docks were brave and heroic. The common people and all of the soldiers worked together to produce this outcome. This is not the credit of one person alone!”

Fang Zizhen looked at his daughter with admiration as his back became straight. He had a proud look at his face. He felt like all of his colleagues knew that the person who was in front of the emperor, the little girl with the calm demeanor who was under the eyes of all of the officials in the room, was his daughter! With such a daughter, he was proud and full of glory!

Zhu Junfan revealed a faint smile and slightly nodded his head as he praised, "However, you cannot discount your own efforts ah! If you weren't there to give the timely warning, then when those pirates attacked the docks, it was likely it'd be a pyrrhic victory even if we won! Now, the county's soldiers had fully defeated the pirates and the damage to the docks were kept to a minimum. This is definitely related to your efforts!"

"Thank you for your compliments, this subject is ashamed and dares not to accept the honor!" In fact, Yu Xiaocao was quite pleased to receive the emperor's compliments under the eyes of all of these court officials. Since the emperor himself had admitted that she had done a good job, didn't that mean that he wanted to give her some type of reward? The rewards from the emperor had to be expensive and good right? Sparkling gold and beautiful jade, the more the better. 'Just bury me in riches ah...'

"Your Imperial Majesty, this subject is a bit confused about something!" General Shi, who didn't have a good relationship with Fang Zizhen, suddenly stepped forward and interjected as he looked at Yu Xiaocao from the corner of his eye.

Zhu Junfan knew that General Shi was a great general who had previously fought with his imperial grandfather. At that time, he had actually fought against the previous dynasty's General Zhao and General Fang when they were still master and disciple. On the battlefield, he had lost more than he won against those two, so he had never forgiven them for that.

After the previous dynasty was overthrown, General Fang had been given the title of 'Zhaoyang General' by his imperial grandfather after his wounds had healed. Although it wasn't a position with a lot of power, it was still a court appointed position that got an official salary. This never sat well with General Shi. So many of his soldiers had died under the hands of Fang Zizhen, and he had vowed to personally take revenge for those men with his own hands.

However, these two enemies were now colleagues under the same court. How could he not be sullen about this? Thus, from time to time, he would jump out to provoke Fang Zizhen. It was rumored that, in private, the two of them had fought numerous times and each were victorious or defeated at different times. Luckily, both of them knew how to restrain themselves for the greater picture and had never ended up fighting to the death. Whether it was the emperor emeritus or the current emperor, both of them turned a blind eye to this.

Weren't they supposed to reward the people who were good at farming at Tanggu Town today? How come Fang Zizhen, that bastard, was also being pointed out for a reward now? If this went on, wouldn't that fellow, Fang Zizhen, be promoted to the ranks of nobility? That was not okay! He absolutely could not allow that fellow to get something good! General Shi fiercely glowered at Fang Zizhen.

“Beloved Official Shi, what are you confused about?” Zhu Junfan felt a bit powerless. Someone else was trying to raise issues now!

General Shi seriously looked at Yu Xiaocao and said, “Little girl, you say that you're good at swimming and can swim deep in the ocean. This, I believe! However, you are also claiming that you can swim faster than the ships, fast enough to get to land before them. Furthermore, you also had enough time to warn the docks. This is something that I and other people find hard to believe!”

There were quite a decent number of officials in the court who had decent swimming skills. However, were any of them willing to claim that they could swim faster than a ship and at a speed that was much faster? No one was willing to say that! This was something impossible that no one could believe. Just how brave was this little lass? She was so gutsy that she was willing to come up with such an absurd lie to fool the emperor, did she not know that deceiving the monarch was a crime worthy of death?

Fields of Gold Chapter 418 - Tit for Ta

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“Yu Xiaocao, what do you have to say to this?” General Shi's doubts did make some sense. Did his old transmigrator friend have some sort of treasure on hand? Zhu Junfan rubbed his chin and looked with great interest at the little lass who didn't seem frantic at all.

Yu Xiaocao turned her head to look at the old general who was nearing sixty years of age. She was quite perplexed, 'I have never seen him before ah, let alone have the opportunity to offend him. He looks like Zhang Fei [1] and an old crabby old man, so why is he targeting me? Perhaps...he's jealous of the recognition that I'm getting?'

“Your Imperial Majesty...and this old general! You probably don't know that this subject had saved a juvenile dolphin about two years ago when I was swimming in the ocean. That little dolphin is very clever and lively. After healing its wounds, it remembers me and always comes over whenever this subject goes to gather seafood on the beach or dives in the water. It always frolics around me and swims to play around.”

“This subject accidentally found out that the little dolphin can also carry a person in the water as it swims at high speed. It swims faster than a fast...fast ship. From time to time, it'll take me along into the deeper ocean to play around. Everyone in my family and Royal Prince Yang knows about this. This is also the main reason why they are okay with this subject going out to the deep ocean alone. That day, it was Xiaobu— that is the name that this subject gave to the little dolphin— who carried me on its back as I swam in the ocean!”

Yu Xiaocao looked very calm and collected. Even though the thing she was talking about seemed a bit bizarre, the vast majority of officials at court believed what she said. However, there was also a group of people who snorted at this story, such as the nearby General Shi.

Zhu Junfan noticed that General Shi seemed to not believe a single word, so he looked at Zhu Junyang and asked, “Junyang, is everything that Yu Xiaocao said true or not?”

“In reply to Your Imperial Majesty, everything she said is true! This subject has personally seen it!!” Royal Prince Yang stepped forward a couple of steps to arrive next to Yu Xiaocao. His phoenix eyes swept a look at her and, for a second, met Xiaocao's eyes. It was as if he was trying to say, 'Don't worry, this prince is here!’

Zhu Junfan faintly nodded his head and looked towards General Shi to ask, “General Shi, do you still have anything to say?”

“Your Imperial Majesty! It's not that this subject doesn't believe Royal Prince Yang but this story is a little too inconceivable and hard for all of us to swallow ah!” General Shi frowned until his face became a mess of wrinkles. His messy beard moved as he spoke and gestured, trembling occasionally.

Yu Xiaocao furrowed her delicately shaped eyebrows and gave General Fang a look full of doubt, “General Shi, have I offended you in the past ah? Why are you deliberating targeting me, a young maiden?”

“Impertinent! In front of the emperor, who can stand you spewing nonsense? When has this old man ever tried to deliberately target you? I am only stating the facts! The claims you are making are too inconceivable!” General Shi opened his eyes wide, such that they resembled gongs, and glared fiercely at her. The look on his face would have scared a true girl around ten into tears.

Yu Xiaocao wasn't intimidated by his act! She wasn't lying so what was there to be afraid of? That being said, it was clear that the situation was in her favor as the emperor seemed to be on her side. This bad tempered and stubborn old general wasn't going to get anywhere even if he continued to make trouble.

“The facts? What facts are you talking about? Everything I said was the truth. Without proper investigation, you have no leg to stand on! Any villager in Dongshan Village knows about this. As soon as you investigate, you would find that out. Why would I try to lie to the emperor ah? The laws state that deceiving the emperor is a crime worthy of death and could even implicate nine generations of one's family! Do you think I'm an idiot, ah? That I'll gamble with my life to make a joke?” Yu Xiaocao no longer tried to embellish her words in an elegant way. In any case, the general was a military official. If she said things in a way that was too flowery, he might not even be able to understand!

“Dolphins can get close to people and also play with you? A bunch of crazy nonsense! Your Imperial Majesty, this official hopes that you will heavily punish this lass who is misleading the public with her rumors!” General Shi was infuriated that a little lass was schooling him, an old man. How could he possibly endure this?

“Why do you have to say that I need to be punished? Because I'm telling the truth?? Old General, don't try to use your status as an old man against others and try to threaten the court with your previous contributions to force the emperor to make a decision! The emperor himself will give this subject justice and determine what is right or wrong!!” Yu Xiaocao gave the crabby old man a fierce glower. 'You want to proclaim me guilty? Your words don't mean anything!'

General Shi was furious but an inkling of alarm appeared in his heart. Using his might as a general to threaten the emperor was a crime that wasn't insignificant! He had underestimated this little girl. Although she looked like a naive, rural country brat, he didn't expect her to have such a crafty and cunning mind!

“Don't speak nonsense! When has this old man ever tried to force the emperor? Your Imperial Majesty, please believe this old official ah!” General Shi cried out his grievances.

Zhu Junfan looked at General Shi in an amicable manner and gently asked, “Beloved Official Shi, have you been to the ocean before?”

“This old official has never been!” General Shi was a bit perplexed that the emperor would suddenly change the subject and ask him about something unrelated. Regardless, he obediently replied.

“Then have you seen the creatures that are named dolphins before?” Zhu Junfan continued to ask a follow up question.

“This old official has not seen them before...” General Shi's confusion increased but he continued to honestly respond.

Zhu Junfan smiled, “In the past, when we were at the shipyard, we had gone out to sea for a period of time. While testing out ships, we had once come across a pod of dolphins in the water and they chased and swam around the ship, jumping and playing excitedly. Dolphins are a type of gentle and clever sea creatures. If you train them, they can do quite a few complicated maneuvers and tricks. We have also heard of stories from old fishermen who said that dolphins had saved people in the past. Thus, the things that Miss Yu is saying aren't completely out of line or unbelievable.”

General Shi noticed that the emperor was clearly on the side of the Yu Family's lass, so he felt a bit upset. He still needed to persevere to the end, “Your Imperial Majesty, stories, after all, are just stories!”

“Your Imperial Majesty, Old General, I'm not making up stories here! Animals are very sensitive. If you treat them well and have good intentions, they will be gentle back. If you have bad intentions towards them, then they will treat you accordingly. That year, during the locust disaster, all of the herbivores in the mountain had nearly died out. Thus, the carnivores were on the edge of starvation. My younger brother and I went into the mountains to gather firewood and encountered a very thin and skinny gray wolf...”

All of the officials in the throne room seemed to be very interested in this story and turned slightly to hear better. Yu Xiaocao paused for a second and then continued, “However, it didn't hurt me or my younger brother and instead brought us to a cave in the mountains. It took out two little wolf pups that were about to starve to death! It placed the two wolf pups in front of me and my younger brother and gave us a look before it staggered away!”

“And then?” Zhu Junfan stared at her intently, seemingly interested in what happened next.

“And then? We saw that the wolf pups looked quite pitiful, so we brought them back home to raise. Later on, our family was attacked by a pack of starving wolves. That gray wolf appeared again and not only helped us fight off that pack of wolves but also saved my father's life ah! I knew that the gray wolf was thanking us for helping it raise its pups, which was why it came over to help!” Yu Xiaocao simply

sketched the story out for everyone. Zhu Junfan gave her a disapproving look as he felt her story telling skills were not that great. Such an interesting and thrilling story was told in such a boring and lifeless manner.

“Are you certain that you're not making this all up? You encountered a starving wolf and it didn't rush over to kill you to become its dinner, who would believe that?” General Shi persisted in his own views. He truly believed that Yu Xiaocao was full of lies and not worthy to be trusted.

“I don't care if you want to believe me or not. As long as the emperor believes me, that's what matters! Your Imperial Majesty, those two wolf pups have already grown up to become adult wolves and they're taller than me. They now guard my family's residence. This time, when the Wokou pirates attacked, my whole village along with Princess Consort Jing fled into the West Mountains to hide. Those two wolf pups went out to hunt every day and caught a lot of game for us to add to our meals!” Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at the old man.

“Are you certain you're talking about wolves and not dogs?” General Shi snorted disdainfully.

“Our family's wolves have been hand raised since they were young, so they're even more obedient than dogs! My family also has a small roe deer that knows how to go to the restroom on its own! It's up to you if you want to believe me or not! I'm too lazy to argue more with you...” Yu Xiaocao twisted her head around to let the old man only see the back of her head.

“You...Your Imperial Majesty, just listen, there's nothing believable that the little lass is saying...”

“Old General Shi, don't get too emotional! Whether or not she's telling the truth can be easily found out when the emperor sends people over to investigate at Dongshan Village!” Royal Prince Yang was getting annoyed with this old man who was always bullying his little lass and couldn't stay silent anymore.

Zhu Junfan also nodded his head, “Beloved Official Shi, the lass from the Yu Family also said that everyone in Dongshan Village knows about this. If you don't believe her, you can go there yourself to take a look. Wouldn't you be able to find the truth then? You can claim that the little lass is lying but can you say that the whole village is also lying too?”

“Your Imperial Majesty is wise and brilliant!” Yu Xiaocao proudly glanced at General Shi with a hint of amusement in her eyes as she expertly flattered the emperor.

“Since there are people who have doubts about your contribution to the Wokou pirate disaster, then we will shelve this issue for now. We have also heard that your Yu Family's farmstead planted wheat that harvested up to six hundred catties per mu. Is this true?” Zhu Junfan finally remembered what he had summoned the Yu Family's father and daughter for, so he waved a hand at General Shi to dismiss him and started to ask about their wheat.

Yu Xiaocao retreated one step and gently pulled at her father's sleeve, hinting that he should be the one to take this honor.

Yu Hai let out a quiet sigh and stepped forward, “In reply to Your Imperial Majesty, this is a true fact!”

Zhu Junfan sat up straight on his throne and inquired in a voice that had a hint of eagerness, “Tell us, just how did you manage to cultivate wheat to have such a high output?”

Yu Hai thought for a bit and then replied, “In reply to Your Imperial Majesty, this subject's daughter had carefully picked through the wheat kernels to only select the plump and big ones. When planting, we made sure to be very careful and the tenant farmers all worked very hard. In addition, the past year has had good favorable weather, so...”

“That is not the whole truth!!” Minister Liu hurriedly jumped out and interrupted Yu Hai to explain, “The experimental fields at the Imperial Plantations all have one person in charge of each mu. In addition, we also pick through the seeds very carefully to select the very best. The capital's climate is pretty much the same as Tanggu Town's. However, whenever we harvest, our fields have never reached around four hundred catties per mu! Brother Yu, don't hide it anymore and tell us the entire truth about your process ah!”

Yu Hai revealed a somewhat awkward expression and carefully thought before he finally replied, “As Minister Liu said, there doesn't seem much difference between how this commoner's farmstead planted and tilled the winter wheat! Ah! This commoner finally recalled something. When we were done selecting the seeds and before we started planting, we had sprayed the seeds with a special pesticide that this commoner's daughter had mixed up. Perhaps that is the reason...”

Fields of Gold Chapter 419 - Her Secre

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Minister Liu suddenly opened his eyes wide and looked at Yu Xiaocao, who had her head lowered in an attempt to receive less attention. He laughed and said, “Fantastic!! The secret to having high-yielding crops must be here! Last spring, Miss Yu had gone to the Imperial Plantations once to look at the

experimental fields. At that time, she had also given us a pesticide and said that it could prevent pestilence and bugs from harming the crops. That autumn, we had an immense harvest of corn and the ears of corn were larger than the previous year by a great magnitude. The kernels of corn were also large and plump. The fields had surpassed one thousand and five hundred catties per mu. Miss Yu, do you still have any of that pesticide left? We've already planted the corn now but it shouldn't be too late now, right?"

Yu Xiaocao raised her head to look at this old man. Minister Liu's head of hair had gone completely white and his skin seemed somewhat rough and tanned from going to the Imperial Plantations often and getting sun exposure. A few wisps of admiration rose in her heart. She lightly nodded her head and replied, "This subject did bring some of that pesticide along this time. It'll be the same as last year. One bucket of water mixed with one drop of the pesticide should do the trick. The mixture should be sprayed on the corn seedlings and should have the same effect."

Director Bai of the Imperial Court Clan noticed that Royal Prince Yang was protecting the Yu father and daughter pair. His eyes whirled quickly and he stepped forward to say, "Your Imperial Majesty, you often say that 'the court must work for the people and food is the God of the people'. The country will only be stable and prosperous if the common people do not have to worry about starving and dying from the cold. This subject has already heard that Miss Yu has made contributions to medical science but I didn't know that by combining her medicinal skills and farming knowledge that it could make such a great benefit! Emperor, if Miss Yu can publicize the recipe for her pesticide, then that would be a great contribution to the whole country!"

Yu Xiaocao's eyes flickered when she heard the official's proposal and she looked down. Uneasiness bubbled up inside of her. She definitely had the recipe for the pesticide! However, the problem was that the most important ingredient wasn't something that could be found normally in this world. If she told them that the pesticide required mystic-stone water that was full of spiritual energy as its main ingredient, then it was likely that the emperor and all the officials would think she was a raving lunatic. On the other hand, would they think that she was trying to fool them? She was screwed, what should she do now?

Zhu Junyang could minutely tell from the little lass's stiff demeanor that she was feeling very nervous and anxious. The little lass clearly had a big secret. This was something he had known for some time. Was this pesticide one of those secrets that she was hiding?

"Your Imperial Majesty, this official believes that forcefully taking someone's personal recipe is harming their livelihood! Yu Xiaocao spent many months slaving over this to create such an efficacious pesticide. If your majesty does as Official Bai says, using your imperial authority to take her recipe, wouldn't that be an abuse of your power to force the common people ah?" Zhu Junfan found Zhu Junyang's every

word and act to be very hilarious. His younger cousin had finally grown up and he now knew how to protect the person he admired the most.

Official Bai was the person in charge of the Imperial Court Clan, so he was very aware of who had the most prospects within the imperial clan. It was clearly that the juniors from Imperial Prince Jing's estate were the future stars. Prince Jing had three sons. His eldest son was steady and calm and would inherit the estate in the future. His second son was talented at martial arts and had gone to the northwest two years ago. His talents had shone on the battlefield and caught General Zhao's eyes. It was clear that his future would definitely be boundless.

As for Prince Jing's youngest son, the rumors said he was cold and unfeeling with an explosive temper. However, in the past two years, the emperor had been regarding him with increasing importance. Furthermore, he consistently finished all of the tasks assigned to him by the emperor. Thus, he had been given the title of Royal Prince Yang before the age of twenty and had also been awarded with feudal lands. In the future, it was likely with his continued hard work, the youth may easily become a titled imperial prince. A family that had two imperial princes in it was definitely something to look out for within the extended imperial clan!

Official Bai was a shrewd man. After the last few court sessions, how could he not tell that Royal Prince Yang regarded the Yu Family in a different light? He had originally tried to get on the prince's good side by reminding the Yu Family to give up their recipe for the good of the country. That way, the emperor would be pleased and reward them with sinecure titles in the court. Yu Xiaocao would naturally become the daughter of an official's family then. Thus, in the future, if Royal Prince Yang wanted to, he could easily take her into his back courtyard without anyone quibbling about her status.

However, his attempt at flattery had utterly failed as the first to object to his proposal was Royal Prince Yang. Since it was like this, he couldn't continue to persist and instead hurriedly said, "Royal Prince Yang is right! The emperor loves his people as if they were his own children. It was this official who was not thinking things through!"

Zhu Junfan had been an emperor for almost a decade so he naturally spotted the minute change in the little lass's demeanor. He couldn't help but let his imagination run wild. Wasn't it just the recipe to a pesticide ah? Why was the lass so nervous all of a sudden? Was it...perhaps his previous suspicions were right and the little lass had gotten a separate dimension to use when she transmigrated over? Thus, the so-called pesticide was just a way to disguise her usage of the spiritual water from the separate dimension?

The more he thought down those lines, the more he decided this made sense. By giving up the recipe for the pesticide, it would be of great benefit to the country and the people. Even without Official Bai's

reminder, a dummy would also know that giving it up would be advantageous in all ways. However, this Yu Family's lass, who was clearly a sharp one, didn't open her lips at all. When Official Bai started hinting, she also pretended to hear nothing and only lowered her head more.

Furthermore, his younger cousin had immediately jumped out as soon as the lass started to become uncomfortable to help her get out of this situation. In fact, he used the excuse of abusing one's imperial power to bully the commoners to stop him. For the sake of giving the common people enough to eat, would he, the emperor, care about gaining the reputation of bullying one person ah? Hmph! Did that fellow, Zhu Junyang, also know something that made him want to protect the little girl so much?

After thinking a bit more, Zhu Junfan started to become angry. This old transmigrator friend was truly too blatant about things. How could she so easily tell someone else the secret of her separate dimension as well as a spring full of mystic-water? These were extremely valuable possessions! Furthermore, if she had to tell someone, why didn't she tell him, her fellow transmigrator? Was she afraid that he would kill her to gain her treasures? Was he, the emperor, truly such an evil person? However, if this little lass truly had these treasures on hand, then he needed to pay more attention to her. That way, he could prevent someone else from suspecting her...

The sound of Yu Xiaocao's clear and crisp voice roused him from his thoughts, "Your Imperial Majesty, this subject isn't being stingy over the recipe for the pesticide but there is a problem with one of the ingredients. It is very hard to find. Because of that, other than myself, no one else is truly able to create a pesticide that is as efficacious."

How about that? Wasn't his guess correct? That incredibly hard to find ingredient had to be water from the mystical spring. Other than the little lass's separate dimension, there wasn't another spring to be found in this world. Hmph, hmph! The incredible pesticide was only a way to hide the fact that she had access to a spring with spiritual water!

The heavens were too unfair. The little girl was given a giant golden finger when she transmigrated— a special, separate dimension, but what about him? He had only downed two bottles of beer and fallen drunk. After transmigrating over in a muddled manner, he ended up in the Great Ming Dynasty in an alternate reality. Fortunately, his imperial grandfather was also a transmigrator. Otherwise, he would have been locked up long ago by people mistaking his odd thoughts and ways as the signs of a crazy maniac.

When he transmigrated over, other than having a head full of knowledge in regards to ship-building, he didn't get any other advantage. However, that wasn't a complete loss. Using his knowledge, he was able to engineer new ships that were able to cross oceans to travel to the western hemisphere and return

with precious goods. Furthermore, he was able to bring over new crops early. In addition, he had altered early forms of rockets and cannons to be much more effective. When he traveled across the seas, using those new weapons, he was able to defeat many pirates. The results could be seen recently. When the Wokou pirates had attacked, the reason why the prefectural city's navy was able to push them back with minimum losses had a lot to do with his contributions to the engineering in this country.

However, he also wanted to have a mystical spring and a separate dimension where he could plant crops and improve their yields. What should he do? Perhaps...he should have his secret soldiers catch the little lass, then threaten and torture her until she gave up her goodies? Was that a bad idea? After all, they were both fellow transmigrators and, in his past life, he had been a person who tried to do good for the world.

Then should he...force the little girl under house arrest and have her use her special items for him for the rest of her life? Ahem ahem, that seemed a bit too dishonest and cruel. The little lass didn't have it easy either. She had also been forced over into a strange world and she didn't even get to transmigrate into someone of status. He had heard that she had endured quite a few years of hard times in this world. Argh, how could he bear to torture someone in the same boat?!

Then...maybe he should use a honey trap to bewitch the little lass such that she would willingly 'work hard' for him? Ahem ahem, this might cause misunderstandings. He wasn't the sort of bastard who would steal a woman from another man. In fact, he was thinking of using his little cousin, who had a high IQ but low EQ, as bait. If his cousin married this little lass, then they would all be one family in the future. As the older cousin, it wouldn't be too dastardly to have a few requests, right?

"Your Imperial Majesty..." Su Ran, who was standing next to Zhu Junfan, could tell that the emperor had been spacing out for a while and couldn't help but open his mouth to remind the emperor that he was currently at court. Concentration was a must!

Zhu Junfan sat up straight and had a sanctimonious look...ahem ahem, it was an earnest expression on his face, and said to Yu Xiaocao, "Lass, since you're the only one who can make this pesticide, then I'm afraid you'll have to work harder in the future to make as much pesticide as possible! There have been disasters plaguing the people these past two years and they have suffered quite a lot. In many places, eating until one is full is an extravagant hope and most only wish to have enough food to not starve to death. Since you have the ability, we are afraid that you'll have to do the most work in the future!"

Yu Xiaocao let out a deep sigh in her heart. She was truly afraid that the emperor would force her to cough up the recipe for the pesticide. If that was the case, she had just come up with an idea—the recipe for the pesticide was complicated and if other people couldn't make it correctly, it had nothing to

do with her. She was fortunate that the emperor was a good ruler and didn't force her. Otherwise, she would have to make up a fake recipe for the pesticide to hand out!

“This subject will do my best to deserve the emperor's trust. I didn't have much to do during the winter season, so I made quite a bit of pesticide that I stored in the hidden cellar at my home in Dongshan Village. Fortunately, when the Wokou pirates came, they didn't find it and destroy it. This subject will send a letter home and have my family bring it all over!” With the crisis over, Yu Xiaocao felt every cell in her body relax perceptibly. Zhu Junyang, who was watching her from the back, silently laughed at her.

There truly was a batch of pesticide in her family's cellar at Dongshan Village. However, Yu Xiaocao didn't actually make it during the winter. Instead, she made it recently as she wanted to take advantage of her family's success at cultivating high-yielding grains to sell it to people in Tanggu Town. Who would have thought that before she could implement that plan, she and her father had been called into capital by an imperial decree? Sigh! She had missed out on making a bunch of money. Her heart was currently aching at the thought!

As Yu Xiaocao talked about bringing this batch of pesticide in, she couldn't completely hide her sorrow at losing out on another money making plan. Zhu Junfan thought that her money-grubbing ways were quite amusing. It looked like this old transmigrator friend of his was truly someone who loved making money!

After thinking about it, he had to admit that everything she did made money. First she started selling braised pig offal, then she came up with early-ripening vegetables. Following that, she cultivated large and sweet watermelons and opened a pharmaceutical workshop as well as a braised food shop. Everything she did was a method to become rich. This Yu Family was truly hiding more than it showed. He reckoned that their family was quite wealthy at this point. They may not be at the point to rival wealthy imperial merchants, but they had to be among the top of the families in Tanggu Town.

Fields of Gold Chapter 420 - Female Official?

In a corner of the capital, at a small teahouse...

“Did you hear about the news? A father and daughter pair from a fishing village were summoned to see the emperor because they are good at growing crops and were even awarded with an official's position!” The person who was speaking was a man around the age of forty. He was dressed in homespun clothes that had patches on it, and his feet were crusted over with yellow mud. He was a sturdy fellow with a full beard on his face.

“What? Someone can become an official from planting fields? Don't take everyone for a fool! Who doesn't know that if you want to become an official you need to spend decades studying your pants off

and slowly test your way up? Even during the most disorderly times of the past dynasty, you needed a lot of money in order to become even a lowly official.” This person looked like a county official who had fallen on hard times. He was dressed in a long robe that was going white from being washed and he had a thin figure. His whole head had gone white with age and the look he gave the peasant farmer was full of disdain.

“County Official Suan, did you just come to the capital ah? The whole capital has heard about this, so who wouldn't know? It's said that the Yu Family is truly spectacular. The winter wheat they grew yielded up to five to six hundred catties per mu, which is multitudes higher than what other people have done! If this type of wheat can be disseminated throughout the country, we would all be able to eat white flour every day and then eat some meat every few days...” The peasant farmer who had mud on his feet had a face full of longing. Becoming an official was a goal that was too far away for him. His true desire was to be able to eat until he was full and allow his wife and children to eat some delicious foods.

“Older Brother Zhang, my youngest brother-in-law's second aunt's cousin works at the yamen. I heard that the imperial court will set aside a portion of these high-yielding seeds to be sold at a fair price. The seeds sold will be the wheat seeds that they got from the Yu Family as well as last year's seeds, which were from some kind of new plant that can yield a thousand catties per mu. I asked my youngest brother-in-law's relatives to help with keeping an eye on things. As soon as news gets out, we can rush over to stand in line to buy some...”

The person who just spoke was a man who was a bit younger than the other peasant farmer. He had tanned skin and the corners of his eyes had some faint wrinkles. His clothes had a few patches in them and he had rolled up his pant legs high. He had one foot on the bench and when he spoke, his voice sounded like thunder as it was quite loud.

County Official Suan snorted sardonically and shook his head with disdain, “Can such a good thing actually fall upon lowly people like you? Who doesn't want to get their hands on high-yielding seeds? I'm afraid that, as soon as word gets out, all of the wealthier families will buy them out!”

The younger man who had patches on his clothing glanced at him and noticed that the man surnamed Zhang was now worried. He hurriedly reassured him, “Older Brother Zhang, don't panic. My youngest brother-in-law's family said that the emperor sent Royal Prince Yang to oversee the seeds. Have you heard of Royal Prince Yang yet? All of the members of the imperial family and the high-ranking officials' families have to tread softly around him. Even the officials at court are afraid of offending him. With Royal Prince Yang in charge, none of those noble and wealthy people will try to hoard the seeds without

thinking about the consequences. Our village isn't very far from the capital. If we come here as soon as the news gets out, we can probably buy some before it runs out.”

The man surnamed Zhang let out a sigh of relief, “If it's truly like that, then we will soon have better lives! Let's not talk about the grain that can yield a thousand catties per mu, even the Yu Family's winter wheat could help us better our situations if we plant a few mu with those seeds. If this can allow us peasant farmers to live a life where we can get enough to eat and not freeze to death, I have no objections to the Yu Family's father and daughter becoming officials, no matter how high ranked they are!”

“What nonsense! People who plant crops well can also become officials? Then where does that place us scholars? It's truly too scandalous to even think about! Doesn't that mean Zhang so-and-so who raises pigs well and Li so-and-so who raises cows well can also become officials too?” County Official Suan thought about how hard he had studied for fifteen years and he had only passed the county level exams after all that work. The fact that someone else could become an official simply from planting crops well was too unfair!

The farmer named Zhang had long gotten annoyed with this haughty scholar's demeanor and couldn't help but interject, “What's the point of becoming an official from studying alone if you can't help the common people better their lives? The emperor himself has said that the commoners are the backbone of our country. The country will only be stable and prosperous once everyone has enough to eat and enough to wear! Can raising pigs and cows well help us commoners eat to our fill and not freeze to death? The Yu Family's father and daughter are just this skilled, so their official titles were also given to them on basis of their hard work. There's no point in being angry about this!”

County Official Suan sneered. People who walked different paths couldn't see eye to eye. It was useless for him to argue with these coarse people who couldn't read a single word! He picked up his teacup and drank a mouthful of bitter tea. Although his heart was full of disdain, he didn't say anything else.

The younger man dressed in clothes full of patches started talking again, “I heard that the Yu Family's daughter is only around twelve to thirteen years of age but she had also been given the title of a sixth rank official under the Ministry of Revenue. I've only heard of women becoming officials in plays and stories. Whether in the previous dynasty or this one, this is the first time I've heard of a female becoming an official!”

When he heard this, County Official Suan, who had originally planned on staying silent, couldn't hold himself back. He slapped the table and raised his voice, “This is a woman who usurps authority and is turning society upside down! Can a twelve to thirteen year old girl plow the land or turn dirt? Yet she was given a sixth rank official title?? How can this be so?!”

“Are you questioning the emperor's wise decision?” The younger man wasn't very impressed by this county official who only knew how to make acerbic and stinging remarks. He snorted and said, “My youngest brother-in-law's relatives also said that although this Miss Yu is young, she's very clever and hardworking. The minister from the Ministry of Revenue looks highly upon her. Last year, they were only able to nurture that new grain to produce a thousand catties per mu because Miss Yu had gone over and helped them plant. That's the only reason why they had such a great harvest! Also, she's the one who came up with the pesticide that helped the Yu Family's winter wheat get yields higher than the Imperial Plantation can get!”

The young man paused to take a breath and then continued, “That being said, ever since the emperor ascended to his throne, he has elevated the status of women over and over again. Now, there are plenty of women who don't wear veils when they go out on the streets. Furthermore, there are more and more women working in business now. The young woman from the Jiang Family is talented at crafting and sewing clothing. Even the empress and imperial consorts have bought custom made clothing from her. What's so odd about the Yu Family's daughter being elevated to a small official position?”

The man surnamed Zhang guffawed, “If they could sell me enough high-yielding seeds to plant a few mu, I wouldn't protest her becoming a sixth level official or an even higher one! Brother, I bet the Yu Family probably has a lot of seeds back home. Your connections, can they...”

The younger man gave him a look and replied, “That Yu Family's ancestral home is in the Tanggu area and nowhere near the capital. Even if my youngest brother-in-law's relatives had good connections, they can't possibly reach all the way to Tanggu Town! However, I heard that the Yu Family only sent up around eight hundred mu of grain to the court out of their almost one thousand mu plantation. As for the remaining one hundred or so mu of grain, other than keeping enough back to plant for next year, they sold the rest at a higher price. In fact, the price they set was five times the current market price for wheat. Can you afford it?”

“What? Five times the regular market price? Then isn't that saying that a catty of seeds is around fifty copper coins? So planting one mu with these seeds would cost one tael? That's a bit too expensive, right?” Farmer Zhang was stupefied at the price and immediately backtracked. His family had five mu back home, so the cost of seeds alone would be five taels to plant it all. Even if he sacrificed everything he had, he wouldn't be able to come up with that much money.

The younger man shook his head and smiled, “Brother Zhang, I was telling you the price that they set for the grain that they sold to people in Tanggu Town. The Yu Family sold this grain to the rich and wealthy families in town, so those people don't lack for that bit of money. You only see the high price but have

you ever thought that if you could get six hundred catties of wheat per mu, you could still earn around three taels per mu even if you sold it at the regular market price? Do you think those rich merchants and families are stupid and would go into a business to lose money?"

"But...there's no one in our village who could come up with that much money to buy seeds right? Argh, it looks like such a good thing can't fall upon us commoners!" Farmer Zhang was a bit dispirited as he sighed over this.

The younger man immediately comforted him, "Brother Zhang, you probably don't know all of the news. The emperor loves us commoners as if we were his children. He absolutely wouldn't try to earn a profit from us. I heard that the high-yielding seeds will be sold to the public at the regular market price for wheat, which is ten copper coins a catty. That new grain is already being sown in the Imperial Plantation. They're probably planning on selling the rest in a few days!"

"Is the news about the new grain that yields a thousand catties per mu reliable?" Farmer Zhang was a bit hesitant about this.

"How could it not be reliable? I heard the emperor specifically sent down the order to have Royal Prince Yang go to the western hemisphere so he can find some. What was it called...ah! I remember now, it's called corn! Corn can be ground into cornmeal and then carefully filtered. The steamed buns made from corn are a golden yellow and have a sweet fragrance. They are very delicious!" The younger man wanted to show off his superior knowledge and had a very self-satisfied look on his face.

County Official Suan interjected to deflate the young man, "You say it as if you have personally eaten some! The rarer something is, the greater the value. For a crop that has such a high-yield, it definitely won't be expensive in the future. That being said, most of the commoners don't know anything about the corn that you're talking about, so who would dare to buy it? It's possible that after you plant it, you might not be able to sell it. That'd be a gigantic waste of your time, fertilizer, and money!"

"Stop being such a wet blanket! If you don't talk, no one will mistake you for being mute! My youngest brother-in-law's relative said that his immediate superior was fortunate enough to get to eat corn once at a friend's house. Steamed buns made out of fine corn flour were fragrant and delicious. They even have a slight sweet flavor and the more you chew the better they taste! Older Brother Zhang, just think, one mu can produce a thousand catties. Even if one catty can only be sold at the price of coarse grain, you can still make around three to four taels per field ah! In any case, my family has three mu of farmland and we plan on using one to try to plant some corn. Even if we can't sell any, for the next year, at least we'll have grain to eat! I heard that the leaves and stalks from the corn plant can also be used to feed pigs and other farm animals. Next year, my family plans on grabbing two extra pigs and we won't have to worry about finding food for them to eat!! Just thinking about it makes me happy..." The

younger man rambled as his eyes shone with light. It was as if he could already see himself in better times.

Farmer Zhang hesitated for a second and then slapped the table and grimaced, "Since you have already said it out loud, then I too will also get around two mu worth of seeds to plant back home. In any case, it's still grain. If I can't sell it, my family can still eat it ah! Two mu of corn at the very least can produce around two thousand catties at harvest time. At least for the upcoming year, my whole family won't have to starve with that much grain on hand!"

The younger man nodded his head approvingly. County Official Suan was still preoccupied with the thought of the Yu Family becoming officials. He stated in a manner that belied his disapproval of the matter, "A silly little lass was given a sixth rank official position. Then what about her father? Would he be given a higher ranked position, like a third level?"

These people were just a bunch of muddy peasants who couldn't read a single word. If they could become a third ranked official just by being good at raising crops, would the other officials at court be okay with that?

However, the younger man burst out into giggles and said, "It's actually quite interesting. The Yu Family's daughter is now a sixth ranked official under the Ministry of Revenue, but her father is only a lowly seventh ranked official. I heard that he's stationed at Tanggu Town and is especially in charge of managing Royal Prince Yang's feudal grounds' farmlands..."